

ONE YEAR WITH GOD

By

REV. MICHAEL V. McDONOUGH

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Sixty Sermons and Meditations

For Pulpit and Pious Reading

By

REV. MICHAEL V. McDONOUGH

Author of "*The Chief Sources of Sin*"

1915

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DEDICATION.

By kind permission of the Reverend Abbess, the book with its profits and royalties is dedicated to the Poor Clares of Boston, and through them, most reverently and humbly, to the great Prince and Princess of Poverty, their Founder and Foundress, Saint Francis and Saint Clare of Assisi.

PREFACE.

The author aims at extreme simplicity, not hoping to attain so sublime a mark, yet trusting that even a vain endeavor may strike nearer than any lower aim would.

He recommends his book particularly to the simple:—The little ones, of course; but equally those of their elders who relish the everlasting truth of Christ's beautiful words: "Unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matt., XVIII., 3.).

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I.—THE TWO ADVENTS.

1. SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

“And there shall be signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars, and upon the earth distress of nations, by reason of the confusion of the roaring of the sea and of the waves:

“Men withering away for fear and expectation of what shall come upon the whole world. For the powers of heaven shall be moved;

“And then they shall see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with great power and majesty”—(LUKE, XXI., 25-27).

THE Church lays before us in the gospel of today a picture and a warning: a picture of the final judgment-day, and a warning to us to prepare ourselves for it while there is yet time. The gospel describes that awful day when even the powers of heaven shall be moved; when “there shall be signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars, and upon the earth distress of nations”; when “men shall wither away with fear and expectation of what shall come upon them”; and when the Son of Man shall be seen descending “in a cloud with great power and majesty” to judge the world.

That will be His second advent, His second coming upon earth. As He came once in love, so on that last dreadful day He will come in justice. On Christmas Day He descended upon earth as Our Saviour, He came as a Child, mild and meek and merciful; but on the day of general judgment He will come down from the clouds as our Judge, stern and impartial.

Today is the first Sunday of Advent, and we are beginning our preparation for Christmas. We are beginning to make ourselves ready for the approach of that glorious feast, for which angels and men alike rejoice and praise God, the feast of our Saviour's Birth. But the Church desires that while making this preparation we should dwell in thought on the second coming of our Saviour as well as on His first coming, and that is the reason why she brings the general judgment to our minds in the gospel of today. She wishes us not only to remember God's Mercy, but also to be mindful of His Justice; not only to praise God for having redeemed and saved us, but also to do our part, “working out our salvation in fear and trembling;” not alone to keep the joyful feast of Christmas before our minds during this holy season, but also to meditate often on the dreadful day of general judgment.

Advent then is a season of joy, and at the same time a season of penance. It is a season of joy, because it brings us so near to the Birth of our Saviour. As "the time draws near the Birth of Christ," the whole Christian world rejoices; for it is the belief of Christians that their true happiness even in this world, and their bright hope for the life beyond the grave, and their worth and preciousness in the eyes of God, all came to them with that Coming of Christ which Christmas Day commemorates. For by taking our nature upon Himself He made that human nature more precious in God's sight than it had ever been, just as by dying for us He saved our souls. And so, while Christmas draws near to us, we certainly have many reasons for rejoicing at its approach.

But Advent is also a season of penance. Formerly Advent used to be called St. Martin's Lent in certain countries, because it began from St. Martin's Day and was observed in those times with as strict a fast as Lent itself. And although at the present day it is neither as long as the Lenten season nor as strict a fast, yet it still remains a season of penance.

Penance is enjoined as a preparation for nearly every great feast in the Church's year. Thus when the Feast of the Assumption occurs, in the middle of August, the day before it is a fasting-day of obligation. So also with the Feast of All-Saints on the first of November. And the reason why the Church commands her children to fast on those days is that, through fasting and doing penance on the eve of the holyday, they may be better prepared for receiving the special blessings of the feast on the morrow. With this same purpose she appoints the forty days of Lent as a preparation for Easter, and the four weeks of Advent as a preparation for Christmas.

The veil of the tabernacle is purple today. The priest's vestments are also purple. And the reason is that purple signifies penance, repentance, sorrow for our sins, and true conversion to a Christian life. It is also to remind us that we are entering into a season of penance, that the "Gloria in Excelsis" is omitted from the Mass. From now until Christmas morning the "Gloria in Excelsis" will not be heard at the High Mass unless some great feast should fall upon a Sunday of Advent. And likewise to inform us that we are entering upon a season of penance, the priests all over the world today are preaching repentance to the people, as St. John the Baptist preached repentance during the first great Advent in the desert-places of Judaea: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight His paths." Be converted from your sins and do penance.

As Christians then we should enter upon this holy season of Advent in a spirit of joy, but also in a spirit of penitence. As the Destroyer of sin the Divine Child comes down into the stable of Bethlehem; and a sincere repentance of our sins is the best means by which we can prepare ourselves for His Coming. We should not only strive to avoid every deliberate sin during these weeks of

Advent, but also do penance for our past sins. "Unless ye are converted, and do penance, ye shall not be saved." And in the first place, there should be in our hearts true sorrow for past sins, and an ardent desire and a firm purpose never to repeat them. Then, if we have any sufferings or troubles, we should offer them to God in atonement for our sins. If it were only a simple headache that is offered to Him in this manner, He will receive it graciously: "Whosoever shall give a cup of water in My name, amen, I say to you, he shall not lose his reward" (Mark, IX., 40.). In the same spirit of penance for our sins we should offer Him our daily work, raising our minds now and then for a few seconds, especially at those moments in which we find our tasks harder and more trying than they usually are. And when the fast-days of the season come around, the Fridays of Advent, the Ember-days, and the eve of Christmas, if not dispensed, we should keep the fast strictly, offering to God the mortification which it causes us, as penance for our sins.

If we strive to do these various things, which we can do after all without very great difficulty, we will make this holy season what the Church intends it to be, a season of joy and at the same time a season of penance. And in this manner, while getting ourselves ready for a happy and a holy Christmas, we will be preparing ourselves also for the second Coming of Christ, which today's gospel reminds us of, when He will descend in power and majesty to judge the universe, and when each one of us will have to stand at His judgment-throne in the sight of God and of the whole world, and to answer for our works.

II.—MARY'S IMMACULATE CONCEPTION AND ASSUMPTION INTO HEAVEN.

FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.

THERE is nothing in all the wonderful life of the Blessed Virgin Mary worthier of our humble thought and meditation than the very beginning and the very end of that life.

The beginning of her life was her immaculate conception; its ending was her assumption into heaven. These two, the immaculate conception and the assumption into heaven, are among the greatest mysteries of her earthly career. The angels never tire of contemplating and admiring these mysteries. The saints have pondered on them through all the centuries. The faithful people, low down in holiness yet trusting and striving to make themselves better, meditate upon them again and again.

And the Church herself, with the Vicar of Christ at her head and with un-failing devotion to the Mother of Christ in her heart, gives the utmost prominence to these two great mysteries. One of them, the Immaculate Conception, is a dogma, of faith. The other, the Assumption into Heaven, is a matter of universal Catholic belief. And both of them are commemorated by the Church on festivals which are feasts of the first class and holydays of obligation. In our country there are only six holydays of obligation in the entire year; and of these six one is the feast of the Blessed Virgin's Immaculate Conception, while another is the feast of her Assumption into Heaven.

Now these two doctrines have a certain connection with each other. Joined together they prove that she who was singled out to become the Mother of God, was never tarnished nor contaminated, in the slightest degree, for the shortest moment, either in soul or in body. "She is all beautiful and there is no spot in her."

The first of these doctrines assures us that Mary was not touched by sin even at the first moment of her existence; the second affirms that even her material body was not yielded to physical corruption after her happy death. One of them declares that that glorious, shining soul of God's Mother was never even momentarily beneath the dominion of God's enemy, Satan; the other proclaims that the virginal body from which, like the grapes from the vine, sprang the adorable human Body of Our Saviour, was not abandoned to the grave and the worms and the slow decomposition of nature.

How easy it is, rightly understood, to assent to and to believe these two beauti-

ful doctrines! Persons outside of the Church, who are ignorant of their true meaning, may oppose and deny them. But we who understand them, find them sweetly reasonable and most beautifully consistent with the rest of our Catholic faith.

For, first of all, we know that God became man. Others may believe in God, but Christians must go farther and believe in Christ. Turks and the other Mahometans, Jews and Unitarians, deistic philosophers and some Buddhists believe in God. But Christians "believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, *and* in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." In a word, they believe that God became man. They know that our Redeemer, Who lived for thirty-three years upon this sinful earth and who shared in the griefs of men and endured their sufferings, is as truly God as He is truly man and as truly man as He is truly God. He is not two persons, the one God and the other man; but He is one Person, God *and* man.

And she who gave this adorable Person His human body, she in whom He was conceived and from whom He was born,—though infinitely below God, yet is vastly nearer to Him than any other of His creatures. We truly name her the Mother of God. We rightly claim that sin could never touch her immaculate soul and that corruption could never lay hold upon her most blessed body.

From the first instant of her life, from the very moment of conception, she was free from sin. And this is the mystery and the glory of the Immaculate Conception.

For all humanity had fallen in Adam's fall. One man and one woman made up the entire human race in those happy days of Paradise. That woman and that man sinned grievously against God, and the whole human race was stained by their sin and fell in their fall. And from that sorrowful moment the guilt of the original sin is upon each and every human soul as it enters into this tarnished world. We know from Holy Scripture that the prophet Jeremiah was *born* free from sin, having been sanctified in his mother's womb. We know the same about St. John the Baptist. But both of these great saints were at least for a short time under the dominion of Satan; for though born without the stain of original sin, they were not conceived without it. Mary was not only born immaculate but *conceived* immaculate. She alone of the entire human race *thoroughly* escaped the stain of Adam. She is "our tainted nature's solitary boast."

It had to be so. For she was the mother of our divine Lord, and sin would come altogether too near to God, if it should have touched God's blessed Mother even at the brief and early moment of her conception,

How intimate is the union and how close the connection between mother

and child! They live absolutely one life for so many months. The selfsame air expands their lungs; the selfsame blood pulses through their hearts; they are one body. No wonder that the mother's love is a proverb with us, so warm, so strong, so self-sacrificing, so universal. Marvellously and mysteriously close is the tie between mother and son!

And Mary is the Mother of God. When the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity descended down to earth, it was to her He came. He had decreed to become man, He must have a human body; it was she who gave it to Him. Flesh of her flesh and blood of her blood and life of her life, He was all to her that the son is to the mother. From her He took entirely the beginnings of that holy Body which, when grown and developed into manhood, was to die upon the cross. For nine long months His Heart and hers beat with the same stroke while her pure blood was coursing through His sacred Veins and Arteries. "He was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." He was with her night and day during the years of His holy Infancy. Her arms were His cradle, her breast was His home. He was as near to her as child to mother. And since He was God, she was the Mother of God; and since He was divine, she must have been immaculate.

And therefore we hail her immaculate at her birth, immaculate even before her birth at her conception, spotless in life and spotless in death. What baptism does for the infant born in original sin, what God's miraculous power did for St. John the Baptist and the prophet Jeremiah even before their birth, never needed to be done for Mary. Other saints have *become* sinless through the sacraments and through heroic virtues and through penance and prayer; but Mary was *conceived* sinless. She shone in this tarnished world amidst its fallen and sullied inhabitants, as the moon beams out among the little stars in the darkness of a winter sky. She trod this sinful earth, poor and humble and lowly, unrecognized by the selfish multitudes of men and women whom she moved among, but surrounded by myriads of wondering angels. She bore her burthens and endured her sorrows while the lonesome years swept on. She lived her life in thought and word and deed precisely as God willed it. And then she died her death.

And that glorious end was worthy of the glorious beginning. What had been grandly begun by the Immaculate Conception, was splendidly closed by the Assumption into Heaven. All through that wondrous career of the Mother of God graces and virtues and spiritual excellences of every kind had been multiplying and accumulating; and already shining and spotless at the very beginning of her life, she was far more radiant at its end. God had protected her immaculate soul from the slightest hint or remembrance of sin; and so even after her death He preserved from physical corruption her virginal body. Of

it had been conceived and born our Divine Lord; and the complete victory of Death should not overwhelm that immaculate body, nor the sting of the grave, nor the banquet of the worms, nor the slow decomposition beneath the clay. She must die; because even her Divine Son had died. But when soul and body were separated, it was only for a brief time; then by God's miraculous power they were reunited; and reverently and proudly and loyally the angels of God bore her up into heaven to be crowned as their Queen.

And when we, "poor banished children of Eve, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears", think of heaven where we hope some day to be, and when we feebly strive to picture it to ourselves, we see Mary there reigning in royalty and majesty over the choirs of angels and the souls of the saints. Myriads of human souls, but only two human bodies, in those realms of unspeakable happiness. After the day of Judgment bodies will be there as well as souls. But until that dreadful day, according to a well supported opinion, there are only two bodies* in heaven among all those vast multitudes of souls and angelic presences. Myriads of God's ministering spirits; cherubim and seraphim, principalities and virtues, thrones, dominations and powers, archangels and angels: myriads of the human souls of God's saints and elect: patriarchs and prophets and apostles, martyrs and virgins, pontiffs and people:—but only two human bodies:—and one of these two the adorable Body of our Saviour, united for all eternity with His Soul and Divinity, "seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty from whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead"; and the other the blessed and immaculate body of the Mother who bore Him.

Wretched and sinful, we bow our heads and hearts and souls low down before her. We hail her "holy Queen, Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope," "Refuge of sinners, Comforter of the afflicted, Help of Christians," Queen of the angels and saints in glory, and Queen of poor suffering, struggling humanity here upon this earth. And as we dare to call her Mother, even so may she protect and guard us with a mother's care, and draw us little by little through the temptations of earth to the glories of heaven with a mother's love, and receive us there with a mother's gentle smile.

*An equi-probable theological opinion (St. Augustine pro, St. Thomas con.)

III.—MARY'S JOYS AND SORROWS.

ADVENT.

THE Blessed Virgin's life upon this earth, like all other human lives, was a life of mingled joy and sorrow. But Mary's joys were more intense, as her sorrows were certainly more bitter, than those of other human beings. And while other human beings too often yield themselves up to pride in their hours of happiness and to murmuring and rebelliousness in times of grief, Mary on the contrary was always as remarkable for humility in her joys as for resignation in her sorrows.

From birth to death, from conception to assumption, she simply lived to do the Will of God. And this is the reason why she was as humble in happiness as she was resigned in suffering. She neither rejoiced in anything nor grieved for anything as happening to herself alone, but only as happening to her Divine Son, for Whom she lived and died. He Whom she nursed and cared for, Whom she loved and adored, was always first and greatest in her mind and heart; while she herself in her own estimation was infinitely little and insignificant. And as all her joys and glories came to her through that Divine Son, so through Him came to her all her sufferings and sorrows.

Let us spend a few moments this evening in reverently glancing over some of the bright scenes and dark scenes of our Blessed Lady's life; so that by contemplating her virtues and by earnestly praying for her intercession with God we too may begin to learn to be humble in prosperity and resigned in adversity.

Let us picture to ourselves first that bright moment "when the angel of the Lord declared unto Mary and she conceived of the Holy Ghost." "The angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee called Nazareth to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel being come in said unto her: 'Hail, full of grace; the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women'" (LUKE, I., 26-28). But Mary, "having heard, was troubled at his saying, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be" (29). It was her own meek, humble spirit which troubled and disturbed her. Her humility even at that early age was so perfect and complete, that she thought herself the least among women and the lowliest in the household of the Lord. And when this bright spirit from heaven flashed upon her, it filled her humble soul with trouble and affright. She who had esteemed herself so poor, so imperfect, so lowly, suddenly saw one of heaven's brightest angels bowing down before her. She

heard him hailing her as "full of grace" and "blessed among women"; and she could scarcely believe her ears.

But the angel reassured her: "Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found grace with God. Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb and shalt bring forth a Son. And thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His father; and He shall reign in the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end" (LUKE, I., 30-33). And when she asked how all this should be done, "the angel, answering, said to her: 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee; and therefore also the Holy One, Which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God'" (35). Then Mary understood that it was the Will of God in her regard which was being made known to her; and without a moment's pause or hesitation she submitted herself to that most holy Will. It was the Will of God; and with her pure, humble soul, to hear was to obey. "And Mary said: 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word'. And the angel departed from her" (38).

Let us pause for an instant, to look upon Mary's marvellous humility in this moment of her exaltation. Here was happiness and honor and glory such as never fell again on man or woman. In one joyful moment she was chosen to be the Mother of God, raised high over the entire human race, placed above even the angels of heaven. And in that supreme moment, at which she so suddenly became the greatest and most glorious being in all God's wondrous creation, she felt no vanity, no pride; she could absolutely forget herself and remember only God and His holy Will.

Again we see such humility in joy as only Mary could show us, in that other mystery of the Visitation. It was almost immediately after the announcement of the angel Gabriel, that Mary went into the hill-country to the home of Zachary to visit her cousin St. Elizabeth; and when she had "entered into the house of Zachary and saluted" her cousin, "Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost; and she cried out with a loud voice and said: 'Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?'" (LUKE, I., 41-43). "And Mary said: 'My soul both magnify the Lord: and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Because He hath regarded the lowliness of His handmaid: for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. Because He That is mighty hath done great things to me: and holy is His name. And His mercy is from generation unto generations, to them that fear Him'" (46-50).

Let us consider this wonderful humility of our blessed Lady in her hours of exaltation, this wonderful forgetfulness of self and absorption in God. Think

how hard it is in moments of great joy to remember anything excepting ourselves and our present happiness. When some honor or advancement or good-fortune drops upon us, we are inflated, swelled up with vanity and pride; we are so far from thanking God, that we simply forget Him.

How many religious souls have been turned away from religion, how many Christian souls have been simply ruined, by great and sudden prosperity. With prosperity too often there comes a hardening, callousing ungratefulness towards God, a tremendously, exorbitantly large opinion of ourselves: with prosperity there comes too often a growing conviction that the laws which bind the "common herd" were not intended for us, and that we may break the commandments of God and of His Church at our own sweet will: and then there sometimes follows a grievously sinful neglect of the Mass on Sunday or of the Easter Communion; an idea that *we* need not go to church at all, that we have no need to obey, that *we* have nothing to learn either in church or anywhere else since we "know it all" already: and in certain cases at least a reckless plunge into scepticism and every sort of vice, with the shipwreck of our very faith. This is one of the common roads to hell. "Sweet are the uses of adversity," said a great poet; and dangerous, he might have added, dangerous are the temptations of prosperity to weak and foolish souls. So that it would be hard to say which is more difficult: to be humble in joy and prosperity or to be resigned in adversity and sorrow. Mary was both, in a preeminent degree. And if we earnestly pray to her as our Queen and Mother, she will obtain for us also these two most necessary virtues.

And now for just one moment let us turn from the bright to the dark side of her holy life. We have seen a few of her joys; let us reverently gaze upon a few of her sorrows. Very early after the birth of her Divine Son the clouds began to gather. He was still an Infant in arms when His blessed Mother with St. Joseph brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him in the temple according to the ancient Hebrew law. Now at that time there dwelt in Jerusalem a man named Simeon, "just and devout" as the Sacred Scriptures tell us, who had spent a long life "waiting for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Ghost was in him. And he had received an answer from the Holy Ghost that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord" (LUKE, II., 25-26). When the Holy Family entered the temple that day, this venerable man was praying there. He saw the Infant in His Mother's arms, and recognized Him at once as the promised Messiah, the Lord of heaven and earth. He took the holy Child into his aged, feeble hands. And he blessed God, saying: "Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word in peace. Because my eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples: a light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy

people Israel" (LUKE, II., 29-32). But to the Infant's holy mother Simeon said: "Behold this Child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted. And thy own soul a sword shall pierce" (34-35).

Then Mary knew that the sword of sorrow would pierce her soul; and her wise mother-heart told her that such a sword of sorrow could only reach her soul by piercing first the Body of her Son. Then she understood all that He would have to suffer: that He would be set up for a sign which should be contradicted: that He would be contradicted, opposed, persecuted and slain. And her foreknowledge of all this, and the terrible grief which accompanied that knowledge, made one of the bitterest sorrows of her holy life.

And so she nursed and cared for Him and loved Him while the slow years crept on. And day and night she was suffering in her gentle soul all that He must endure in His sacred Body. Some have asked and wondered how she was able to suffer so much and yet remain alive. The explanation is short and simple. She knew that it was the Will of God. Mary's love for God's holy Will was so pure and single-minded, that she was as resigned in sorrow as she had been humble in joy. And thus, not broken-hearted but with breaking heart, she counted the weary weeks and months and years, looking forward to the dreadful day.

Too soon it came, the day of our salvation, of our Divine Lord's passion, of Mary's greatest sorrow, the momentous first Good Friday. Very late in the forenoon of that dismal day she had seen Him Whom she loved, crowned with thorns, blood-bruised by cruel blows, His divine Face covered with dirt and spittle, painfully dragging His heavy cross along the sorrowful road. She was not even allowed to embrace Him nor bid Him a mother's last good-bye. She could only receive the loving farewell-glance from His weary eyes, and notice the quivering of His lips when He turned His countenance towards her, and the thrill of filial love in all His bloodstained features.

And now she stood at the foot of the cross. Her Son was hanging upon it, the best son that a mother ever had, and loved by Mary with such love as even a mother's heart has never felt. She understood what He was suffering. She knew that He was leaving her, that she was about to lose Him, and that nevermore upon this earth would she have Him as her son to care for and to love. She knew that he was true God and spotless man, suffering innocent, and dying for the sins of others.

And even there, in that awful scene, in that terrible sorrow, Mary was resigned. No rebellion darkened her immaculate heart, no murmur escaped from her blessed lips. For even from the cruel wood of the cross, even from the death-throes of her Son, it was God's holy Will which shone forth to her.

And with breaking heart and with aching soul the Queen of Martyrs bowed herself down before Him and said "Thy Will be done."

Let us pray to her tonight. May she pray to God for us; and by means of her prayers make us humble in joy and resigned in grief. For our life upon earth at best will be a mixture of joy and sorrow. Wherever there is innocence, near to it there will be sin. Wherever there is happiness, near to it there will be misery. Health and sickness, sighs and laughter, smiles and tears, are very close together in this world of ours, and always will be to the end of time.

And therefore let us often think of the Mother of God, who lived her life upon this earth so long before us; and let us ever strive to follow, as lowly, far-off imitators, in her spotless footsteps: humble with her in joy, resigned with her in sorrow, and finally united with her in everlasting glory.

IV.—VENIAL SIN.

(ADVENT.)

"Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy; and according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my iniquity.

"Wash me yet more from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

"For I know my iniquity, and my sin is always before me" (Ps. L., 3-5).

THERE is nobody here tonight who may not fittingly repeat this prayer with the prophet and saint, King David. There is nobody whose soul is perfectly clean from sin. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us," says the Beloved Disciple, St. John, in one of his inspired Epistles (I. JOHN, I., 8.). We all are weak and sinful. We all need a higher assistance to guard and guide us through the dangers of this life. And we may all cry out to God in the weakness and helplessness of our sin-stained souls for still further cleansing from past iniquities and for strength and help against future temptations: "Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy; and according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my iniquity. Wash me yet more from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my iniquity, and my sin is always before me."

It is not about mortal sin that I am going to speak to you, but about venial sin. In regard to mortal sin, I trust that you never forget for one instant its hideous enormity: how it breaks up all friendship and peace between God and the guilty soul: how it destroys the love of God, which is the soul's life, and renders the soul dead and putrid, unfit for heaven, unfit for earth or purgatory, fit only for the fire of Hell. You are Children of Mary, and therefore in a very special manner under the protection of the Mother of God. She in whose spotless heart is the brightest of all purity, she who was conceived immaculate, is your Mother and your model. And certainly your aim is higher than merely to avoid mortal sin.

I am going to speak to you about venial sin, which is not so repulsive to the mind and does not fill the Christian soul with such horror. Venial sins are slighter offences against the law of God. To some persons they seem small and insignificant. They are small, when compared with mortal sins. Yet it is true that when frequently committed they grow ever more dangerous,

lessening our love of God, rendering us more unworthy of His help and grace, weakening our souls, and too often paving the way for mortal sin itself.

We know that venial sins are never punished with eternal fire. We say to ourselves: "I am committing no mortal sins. I am keeping myself in the state of grace and in the friendship of God. Why need I bother about correcting these venial faults of mine? What if I am careless about harmless little lies or about wilful distractions at my prayers? God will not desert me altogether for being slightly uncharitable in my talk about my neighbor. Hell was not made for little sins like these."

And this may be perfectly true, so far as it goes. It is true that venial sin does not remove us from the state of grace nor from the friendship of God, that no multitude of even the greatest venial sins would ever plunge a soul into hell. It is true that, although venial sin displeases God, it never makes us God's enemies. And people who are inclined to be scrupulous, should appreciate this fully and remember it.

There are only too many scrupulous persons in the world; only too many persons who, forgetting God's Mercy and always thinking of His Justice, imagine that every little fault of theirs is a big crime, and so go on worrying and fretting to the end of their lives. It would be well for such persons to realize that venial sin is not mortal sin; and that, although an offence against God, it is a slight offence. Such persons should learn to lean less on themselves and more on God; and while striving to avoid venial sins, they should guard themselves quite as carefully against over-anxiety in the matter and against that spiritual self-confidence and spiritual pride which so often lead to scrupulousness.

It would also be well for scrupulous persons, and indeed for all of us, to bear in mind that there is such a thing as indeliberate venial sin, which we are less fully responsible for, and into which even the saints have sometimes fallen. "There is no just man upon earth that doth good and sinneth not," the Scriptures tell us (ECCLES., VII., 21.). There is no one perfect, no one who may not fall again and again into venial faults of surprise and thoughtlessness at least.

But with deliberate venial sins it is different. From these it is always possible to keep our souls clear, if we truly desire to. A deliberate venial sin displeases God much more than indeliberate sins of surprise or thoughtlessness. It is a venial sin which the sinner commits with his eyes wide open to its malice, realizing that the thought, word or action is wrong and then knowingly and freely proceeding to do it. For instance, you kneel down to say your evening prayers, and in the midst of them some recollection of the day's work or business comes into your mind. At first you do not notice it distracting you, and when you do notice it, you banish it at once. Now that distraction is not a

deliberate venial sin. But suppose you do not banish it. Suppose that after noticing that this thought is disturbing you in your prayers you nevertheless freely allow it to stay, and go on deliberately thinking of earthly things while your lips are speaking to God. Then that distraction would be a deliberate venial sin.

Or for another example, you are talking with someone you do not like, and unkind and uncharitable words escape from your lips. You scarcely mean to talk so, and when you notice what you have said, you are sorry for having spoken it. That venial sin would not be deliberate, but a fault of thoughtlessness or of surprise, one of the indeliberate and smaller venial sins. But suppose that before you speak those unkind words, it occurs to you that they are unkind; suppose that you think with yourself: "I know that it is wrong and cruel for me to say it, but I *will*"; in that case it would be a deliberate venial sin.

So there are these two kinds of venial sins,—the one kind sins of surprise and thoughtlessness, which it is practically impossible for us to escape from altogether, and which are comparatively very small;—the other kind deliberate venial sins, which we can always avoid if we are only bent on doing so, and which are greater in God's eyes and more displeasing to Him.

If we should commit sins of the first kind,—if we should find ourselves falling into some venial fault now or then through thoughtlessness or forgetfulness or surprise,—we are not to be too much disquieted about it. But if we see ourselves committing deliberate venial sins,—reflecting and fully aware that what we are going to do is wrong, even though only venially, and yet of our own free will proceeding to do it,—repeating these deliberate venial sins over and over again,—then we have need to fear, for certainly we are following a very dangerous course; then from out of our weakness and helplessness it is time for us to send up our call for God's assistance: "Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy; and according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my iniquity. Wash me yet more from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my iniquity, and my sin is always before me."

Even deliberate venial sin may appear slight in itself; but it will not bear that appearance if we remember Whom it offends. "It is not an earthly king," St. Jerome said, "it is not an angel nor an archangel, a cherub nor a seraph, whom venial sin displeases; it is God Himself." It offends, slightly at least, the God Who became a man for love of us in order to die on the cross for our souls, the God Who is infinitely good and pure and holy.

Looking back from Purgatory, deliberate venial sins must seem immensely worse and larger than they appear to us now. For in Purgatory our souls

must be purified from every stain, before we can hope to enter Heaven; and what that purification may be, we can only imagine and conjecture. St. Augustine seems to have thought that the fire of Purgatory is substantially the same as the fire of Hell, yet of course with this one infinite difference, that it does not last forever.

Looking back from Hell, the lost souls must consider deliberate venial sins as mighty evils, for it was by deliberate venial sins that they commenced their downward course. If we could see those wretched souls,—if we could make our voices heard through the unearthly oaths and blasphemies which resound forever in that region of horrors, and could question the souls in Hell as to what was the beginning of their ruin, they would answer that they began their downfall by frequent and deliberate venial sins. If they had had a horror for these slighter evils, they would never have fallen into the mortal sins for which they must suffer eternally. If they had not begun by missing their prayers for whole days at a time, they would not have finished with omitting the Mass on Sundays. If they had not begun by stealing pennies or articles of little value, they would never have been guilty of those bigger thefts which are mortal sins. If they had resisted the first temptations to venial immodesty, they would also have resisted their later temptations to mortal sins of impurity. If they had guarded themselves in the first place against talking carelessly and uncharitably about their neighbors, they would not have ended by grievously slandering and detracting, and by spreading broadcast the extremely injurious scandalous stories for which they are suffering in Hell. For the Bible itself tells us that "he who despiseth small things, shall fall by little and little" (ECCLES., XIX., 1.).

Looking back from Heaven, the saints are filled with horror for deliberate venial sin, even as they were filled with horror for it while on this earth. St. Bernard called it more terrible, more frightful than hell, to deliberately sin in even the lightest manner in the face of an all-powerful God. St. Catherine of Genoa would place all the torments of an eternal hell on the one hand, and on the other hand one deliberate venial sin; and would declare after weighing them together in her mind, that she preferred to endure the former rather than to commit the latter.

The saints were filled with horror for deliberate venial sin, because they were filled with love for Almighty God. It is only unloving and lukewarm souls, after all, that will deliberately displease God over and over in these slighter matters. "I would that thou wert either cold or hot," our Saviour said; "but because thou art neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm, I will begin to vomit thee out of My mouth" (APOC., III., 15, 16). And what is it to be lukewarm? It is to be one of those persons who, avoiding mortal sins not through love of

God but through fear of hell alone, do not care how many venial sins they may be guilty of. No venial sin, however deliberate it may be, can make them hesitate. And so they go on, weakening their souls from day to day, yielding to temptation after temptation without a struggle and without a qualm, and ever approaching more and more dangerously near to mortal sin, and to ruin and destruction.

May this perilous condition of lukewarmness never be your condition. May you, not tepid, but rather warm with love for God and neighbor, struggle day by day against your weaknesses, not satisfied with yourself but always aiming at improvement, not trusting to yourself but always leaning on Christ, and with His help constantly striving to avoid every deliberate sin however small. Earnest prayer, regular confessions, daily Communion (or frequent Communion or even weekly Communion in cases where the daily or even the frequent is impossible), and we are sure of the continual intercession of our Mother Mary and the continual assistance of Almighty God.

We are in the Advent season, a season during which God's graces are poured out most abundantly. Legends say that at this time of the year angelic presences cover the whole earth and fill the air like the pure white snow,—that countless myriads of blessed spirits float down from heaven to prepare the sinful earth for the coming of their King. However this may be, it is the *belief* of the faithful that God's graces are poured out more plenteously during Advent than at most other times. "It is now the hour for us to rise from sleep. For now our salvation is nearer than we believed. The night is past and the day is at hand. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light" (ROM., XIII., 11, 12).

If therefore you have been careless and lukewarm so far in this matter of venial sins, henceforth be active and watchful. Resolve to guard yourself from displeasing God deliberately, to guard yourself from every deliberate sin. Ask God to grant you this grace. Pray for it now, during this Advent season which is so plentiful in graces, during this triduum in honour of the holy Mother of God, which will be crowned with the glorious feast of her Immaculate Conception. Pray for it, you who are Children of Mary, to that Mother, who is loving to hear your prayers and powerful to answer them. Send up your cry to God from out of your helplessness, as the prophet King David did so long ago, as believing and loving souls have ever done: "Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy; and according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my iniquity. Wash me yet more from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my iniquity, and my sin is always before me."

V.—FIVE LITTLE HOLES IN A BOX.

(ADVENT.)

THERE are *two* worlds: the material and the spiritual, the lower and the higher, the transient and the everlasting.

The material world includes everything that we can perceive through our five little senses, everything that can be seen or heard, touched, smelled or tasted. It includes this earth with all that is in it; its satellite, the moon; its fellow-planets; the sun of its system; and probably those countless suns of other systems, the fixed stars.

The spiritual world embraces all that our senses cannot perceive, all spiritual things; it is peopled by hosts of disembodied human souls, and by vast multitudes of good and evil spirits possessing an intelligence even higher than human.

The material world, with its planets and suns and tremendous star-distances, seems immensely large to us just now,—our bodies are so small, and their senses so feeble and limited; and our souls during earth-life depend to a certain extent upon our bodies. Thus a full-leafed tree would seem extremely large to an ant.

Yet the spiritual world is vastly greater than the material world. As it certainly is in duration, so it probably is in immensity. For there is a true and just analogy between time and space; and therefore compare that minute portion of your life which you spend on this earth, with the whole of your life in its everlasting completeness,—those little sixty or seventy years of your beginning, with your endless eternity,—and by analogy you may form some vague notion of how small the material world probably is in sight of the spiritual world.

The two worlds are in sight of each other in a certain sense. They may even be much nearer to each other than thoughtless people suppose. Where are heaven and hell and purgatory? In the spiritual world, of course. But where are they in relation to our senses and,—to use the rather material notion of place or location which our earth-life so thoroughly accustoms us to,—if in place at all, where are they in place? We do not know.

Good and evil angels are certainly near to us during our earth-lives. And for all that we surely know, lost souls, and souls in bliss, and souls in purgatory, might also be near to us. Our senses would not show them to us even though they were very near. The microscope was not made to discover stars with,

nor the telescope to search for microbes; neither are our bodily senses adapted for spiritual things. They do not even perceive our own souls, nor the souls of one another. We do not see the departing soul, though we kneel with tear-brimmed eyes close to the death-bed; and neither would we see the souls departed.

Near or far, our senses do not show us the great spiritual world, but only the little material world, which seems so large and all-absorbing to the many. In fact, it is large, relatively. It is large, measured by our bodies. The earth is only a small part of that material world, and yet the earth alone is literally millions of millions of millions of millions of times as large as the body of any human being upon it. It would take septillions of human bodies to make one earth. It would require more than a million earths to make the sun. And even the sun is only a dot in that universe which we call the material world.

The material world is immensely large, measured by our bodies, just as a tree is extremely large compared to the microscopic insect which passes its whole life in a little corner of one of its leaves. And though it were far smaller than it is, yet looking out through our five little senses, it would still seem vastly large to us.

If I had fewer senses than I have, my sensible or perceptible world would be much smaller than it is; yet it would still seem immensely large to me. Take away the sense of sight alone, and how small the world becomes! To a man born blind and passing his whole life in total blindness, how small the material world is! How small, yet how full of mystery! Sunshine and colors, beauty of landscape and marine beauty, dawn and twilight, stars and moon and sun, must all be vague and most mysterious to him, as the spiritual world is to us. He cannot clearly and completely imagine them nor describe them to himself nor draw a mental picture of them, yet he is certain and fully believes in them. So also to a man born deaf, music and noise, like heaven and hell to us, are mysteries, "truths which he cannot *fully* understand," yet which he reasonably believes in.

Suppose that our entire human race had been created without eyes, as certain of the lower forms of life have been; then how very small our sensible world would be! Then there would be no one to tell the blind about the wonders and beauties and vastness of nature. Hearing, smell, taste and touch, and the so-called muscular sense and the sense of locomotion (which are not properly senses), would remain to us; yet how small our world would be,—and how large it still would seem!

Or, again, picture to yourself a person with only the two senses of taste and smell,—a person unable to move or stir from his birth, and at the same time blind and deaf and without the sense of touch. Lying there in his helpless-

ness and isolation, even to him the world would still seem large; yet for him it would consist only of flavours and odours.

If this unfortunate person could have a sane and healthy mind, if he were gifted with even average reason and intelligence, would he be foolish enough to imagine that there was nothing in existence except smells and tastes? Would not his common sense inform him, or would he require grace from on high and supernatural faith to assure him, that there were other things in existence besides odours and flavours?

Or suppose that you yourself had passed every minute of your whole life from your earliest conscious memory imprisoned in a cabin of some ship, with just five little port-holes to gaze out through. Even though you had never met anyone from outside nor ever seen a human face or heard a human voice or received an iota of information from any source exterior to yourself, would you be silly enough to let yourself for one moment deliberately think that there was nothing outside excepting what you could see through the five windows?

Well, the most fortunate of us has but five senses. Our entire human race has but five senses. And the material world, for all its vastness, is merely that portion of God's Creation which we or others of our race can perceive, or in favorable circumstances and with proper artificial instruments could perceive, through those five little senses. What if instead of five we had twenty or a hundred?

Five little holes in a box are the five senses: sight and hearing, smell and taste and touch: you can see many things through the five little holes; but is it wise, or even sane, to think that you can see all?

The box is neither transparent nor translucent. It is the body, in which your spirit dwells peering out at God's worlds. It is made of solid stuff which even X-rays penetrate with difficulty, and during your earth-life you are inside of it. The material world, which you perceive through those five little holes, seems immensely large and important to you just now; but use your mind: think what the unseen, the spiritual world must be: think reverently and humbly what He must be Who governs both the worlds, the all-wise, all-loving, all-powerful Creator, the infinite God.

What you see now through the five little holes, is certainly much less than what you will see when earth-life is over and you have stepped outside the box. Therefore use your mind. Think and reason and pray. Don't be content with what the senses give you. Don't blindly follow the crowd. Don't be overborne by the overwhelming weight and soporific influence upon you of unreasoning multitudes around you,—oceans of human beings who are using practically only their senses,—peering out through those five little port-holes of their souls and vainly trying to make themselves imagine that what they

see through them is all that there is. Use your mind. Be of the chosen ones, the elect, the few.

Multitudes are using only their senses. It's a dangerous custom of our times to say "I don't know" like a lazy school-boy, to refuse to know, to ignore, all that cannot be directly perceived by the senses. It's a prevalent superstition, wide-spread and popular. Not only many individuals, outside of the Church, are dulled and besotted by it; not only small groups and societies of individuals here and there make this superstition their creed; but there are infidel parliaments and governments at present, like that of France for example, which are exerting all their influence to spread the superstition still more widely, and which publicly and brazenly ignore the very possibility of there being anything in existence which cannot be seen through the five little holes in the box.

If the error were strictly confined to any one nation, it would not be so alarming; because that nation, whenever it should become entirely irresponsible, could be taken care of by its neighbors, while the world at large would still advance and mark progress.

But unfortunately the error is not thus confined. Even in steady and well-balanced lands religionless schools are doing what they can to make the error popular; while higher up, in ill-regulated colleges and universities certain so-called scientists adhere slavishly to the prevalent superstition, and hold that material phenomena alone must be considered or believed in. "Science deals only with phenomena," they say, ignoring the great basic truth that science deals also with causes, and above all with the Cause of causes.

The fact is that neither true science nor sane and healthy manhood or womanhood is ever content with what the senses give it. Nevertheless materialistic hallucinations are only too common. Progress and enlightenment and universal civilization itself are impeded and set back by the prevalent superstition. Shoddy books and magazines and reviews, swarming out every day through a venal press from irresponsible scribblers, are rank with it. Many moving-picture theatres and many stage-plays of the moment, reek of it. And the daily newspaper, almost without exception, at least at times and on occasions, is discolored by it.

Don't be submerged in the ocean of folly around you. Stay on the surface, awash, buoyant. Don't be content with the senses. Use your intelligence, your reason, your spirit. Be simple and natural of course, logical, sensible, humble; but do not rest satisfied with the "dim, *un*-religious light" which creeps in through the five little holes in the box.

Rather insist on the full, flooding sunshine of faith, which is all around you like the air if you will only, even fitfully, breathe it in, which is given permanent-

ly from on high sooner or later to all without exception who humbly and perseveringly desire and pray for it. Insist on it, work for it, dispose yourself for it, humbly long for it, and humbly pray for it:—but if you have it already, as you, my brethren, have, jealously guard and diligently increase it:—the sunshine of faith, that lights up two worlds: not the little material world alone with its stars and sun and earth, but the immense spiritual world as well; and that brightly reveals to us, vastly higher and holier than either of His worlds, the great creating, conserving Intelligence, the infinite God.

VI.—THE CAUSE OF CAUSES.

(ADVENT.)

GLANCE out at the wonderful, beautiful, wise old world you are living in. The world is a sign of God, a mirror of God. "For the invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; His eternal power also, and divinity" (ROM., I., 20).

There is a cause for everything. Everything has a cause. That is reason, common sense. To deny that, would be irrational. And God is the Cause of causes.

Go back in thought from son to father, from father to grandfather, from far-off ancestors to ancestors still more remote, till you come to the first man and woman; and back of them is God. Go back in thought through all the forms of brute-life, existing or extinct, through all the forms of plant-life, higher and lower, till you come to the very first beginnings of all mundane life; and back of them is God. Go back in imagination from earth and planets to sun-
nebula, and from that, through countless others vaster and vaster beyond human imagining, to the first great nebula; and back of that is God.

All roads lead to God. Certain or dubious,—the facts of Common-Sense, the theories of Science,—all roads lead to God. All roads of thought lead to Him, and you cannot think at all nor sanely use your reason without arriving at Him.

The world is a mirror of God. Yet in the material world man and woman alone are eminently dowered with His image and likeness. Spirituality and reason and will-power, the rational soul,—that is the one godlike thing in the whole wide world. "And God created man to His Own image, to the image of God He created him: male and female He created them" (GEN., I., 27). The rational soul, spiritual like God, like God imperishable, free like God, and gifted with its noble intelligence, is in man alone. Therefore man is lord of the material world.

Its sun and stars, its "earth and all that is in it," were made for man. The entire material universe was created for man. "As man was made for God, that is, to serve God," said the great Master of Sentences, "so the world was made for man, that is, to serve man." How vastly inferior to us it all is! Brute animals, or vegetable life, or mineral substances, or stars, or sun,—how vastly inferior it all is to mind! And in this lower world man alone has mind.

The great spiritual world, which our bodily senses do not directly perceive, is peopled with countless multitudes of good and evil spirits possessing an intelligence even higher than ours; but this lower material world, which we can see through the five little holes, has absolutely no mind in it save ours.

Use your mind, for it is the highest, noblest part of you, and it is both wisdom and duty to use it. Even as you use your hands and feet, use your mind. Excepting in the infinite God Himself, there is no mind, no intelligence, save that which exists in angels and men. Mind makes you what you are, dimly resembling God, His image and likeness, a fellow of the angels, a citizen in a certain sense of the spiritual world even while you are still a habitant of the material world. Mind renders you the summit and crown of material nature, the lord and master of material creation. Through mind the world is yours, to use as a master for your own salvation and your Creator's glory, to direct, to command. Through mind "all things are yours-----and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (I. COR., III., 22-23).

And mind tells you that everything has a cause. It tells you this so clearly and evidently, that you feel faint and foolish, you reel towards unconsciousness, your "reason totters on its throne," if you try to deny it.

Everything has a cause; and All-Things have a cause. Every fraction of nature or creation has a cause, therefore also the great whole, the sum-total. The whole is nothing more than the sum of all its parts. Every phenomenon which your senses perceive, every smallest portion of the world, every change and motion and activity or energy of it, has a cause; therefore also the world itself. Go back in thought through all causes, through causes of the material order, of the moral, mental, spiritual orders; go back as far as thought will carry you,—from lesser causes to greater causes, from lower to higher, from present to past causes, later to earlier and still earlier;—and back of them all is the Cause of causes, God.

And He Himself? Absolutely without cause, beginning, weakness, imperfection: uncaused, unlimited, independent, necessary, infinite and infinitely perfect.

Somewhere the mind must rest, or it breaks the laws of its being. Somewhere the mind must rest, though it rests in a mystery, "a truth which it cannot *fully* understand." And where does the mind rest? It rests in the Lord. It rests in God. "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God, and our heart is restless and unquiet, until it hath found repose in Thee."

The Cause of causes, the First Cause, must be Himself uncaused; otherwise He would not be the First Cause; and our mind is so made, so constituted that it has to affirm a First Cause, or throw itself into disorder and chaos. The Beginning of all things must be Himself without beginning.

Everything has a cause and a beginning, all beings have a cause and a beginning,—save One. All material things have a cause; therefore also the material universe itself; for the whole is nothing more than the sum of all its parts. All finite spirits have a cause, angels, demons, human souls. The Infinite Spirit Alone, the great Cause of causes, is Himself without cause.

Behold a truth which we little finites cannot *fully* understand, a mystery, yet how compellingly sane and how sweetly reasonable! For reason tells us most clearly that there must be some Being causeless and beginningless; that there must be some Being Who never had either cause or beginning, but always was. Some One Being is "necessary" to understand that there can be other beings at all. Some Being must always have been, must ever be. For if there were ever absolutely nothing, there would always be nothing. Nothing could come from nothing. To the simplest intelligence this is clear and undeniable. Nothing once, nothing forever.

But it could not forever be nothing, for there was always God. Him we cannot directly perceive with our senses, nor fully understand even with our reason. All that our senses can perceive, that is, the entire material world, had cause and beginning. All finite spirits, that is, angels, demons, human souls, the great spiritual world, likewise had cause and beginning. When thought goes back far enough, there was once only the Infinite and Uncaused, there was once God Alone.

The spiritual world is from Him and the material world is from Him: not parts of Him certainly, for He can have no parts: but created by Him out of nothingness. The Infinite can have no parts; and no number of finite parts could make infinity. All "parts" are by their very nature finite; and even if only one part were finite, the whole must be finite; for the whole is nothing more than the sum of all its parts.

Healthy reason affirms these truths so clearly and with such absolute certainty, that even acute and gifted minds, in trying to escape from them, come to grotesque and absurd conclusions. Thus Hume in his mad effort to free himself from religion and common sense proclaims that "Why?" is always a silly question, and "Because" a foolish answer; that there is no such thing as cause or causality! Thus Schopenhauer solemnly assures us that water has will-power; and poor Hegel postulates that the dirt itself is thinking! But these and their weaker imitators are always abnormal and exceptional; while the sane and healthy human intellect has ever and everywhere adhered to common-sense and God.

And so intelligence awakened seeks Intelligence and finds Him. So mind flies to Mind, spirit to Spirit. No rest for the mind till it comes to Him; for all roads lead to God. That is the very nature of mind; and your body can

more easily disobey the law of gravity and ascend up from the solid earth, than your mind (if you will use it) could ignore God or fail to see Him through His works. "For the invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; His eternal power also and divinity."

Quite naturally then great Fathers of the Church call this world the book and the mirror of God, the ladder that leads up to God, the herald and the school-teacher of divine things. "Heaven and earth and all that are in them, behold! they ever and everywhere tell me to love Thee," exclaimed St. Augustine. "Through the creature we ascend to the creature's Lord," said St. Basil; "for when God created this ladder, He prepared a way to Himself by it for those who love Him."

Yet we may confidently expect that while time lasts there will always be wilful minds, and among the educated (so-called) as well as among the unlettered; still we may be quite as confident that the healthy, normal mind of the race will ever "look through nature up to nature's God."

The world is a sign of God. The world shows God. As smoke shows fire, green leaves the springtime, the house a carpenter, the picture an artist, so the world shows God. It could not create itself; for nothing comes from nothing. God Himself could not create Himself, but has always to be. It could not be eternal, that is, without cause or beginning. For every largest and smallest part of it has a cause and a beginning; and the whole is but the sum of all its parts. It must have been created. Daily it visibly teaches "the invisible things of Him" Who created and conserves it. In all its parts and in its entirety it proclaims the power, the infinite intelligence, the love, the glory of its Creator. It is so clear a sign of God, that reflective human reason everywhere, in all regions and at all eras of history, has been able to read the sign aright and to grasp its significance.

And if certain wayward minds have sometimes allowed themselves, or even at this present day allow themselves, to be confused and to misinterpret the sign, they are without excuse. If there be any, using their senses only and failing to use their reason, who will not know God when they could so easily know Him, they are without excuse for their shortsightedness. If there be any who once knew Him, but who have since in pride and folly or wilfulness of intellect banished that knowledge or let it slip from them; any whose opening intelligence revealed Him to them clearly but who later on in life, either through excessive absorption in earthly things, or in order to secure for themselves greater license and irresponsibility of thought and conduct, or through mere grovelling heartlessness and decadence, have allowed themselves to forget Him, they are still more pitiable without excuse. "They are inexcusable,"

said the great Apostle. "Because that, when they knew God, they have not glorified Him as God or given thanks, but became vain in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened. For professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Rom., I., 20-22).

"Fools!" "Professing themselves to be wise!" Foolish professors! Even while the clouds of folly are darkening down over them and shutting them in, it is to be feared that in certain cases "the wish is father to the thought;" and that not so much their mind is darkened regarding God, as their will and heart. "Their foolish *heart* was darkened," St. Paul says. And the Royal Prophet: "The fool hath said in his *heart*: 'There is no God' " (Ps., XIII., 1.). Foolish professors!

Be not of their number nor following. Here and there in universities of our day such professors are teaching, "professing themselves to be wise,"—the more solemn and serious, the more foolish,—representing every differing, warring "school of thought," as they say, but unitedly opposed to the common-sense school. Helpless youths are sitting beneath them and drinking in their preachments. If it were not for the heart-breaking pity of it, it would seem ridiculous. The more gifted ones of the past, like Hume, Mill, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Spencer, were the leaders of unbelief whom the lesser lights of to-day are following.

Be not of their number. Use your mind, naturally, spontaneously, honestly, as God has given it to you to use. Keep in the Common-Sense "school of thought." Do not either smother your intelligence or strive to escape from it. Do not be content with what the senses show you, but let your clear, continuous glance take in also what reason shows you. Do not question the truth, that there is a cause for everything. Believe and hold and cling forever to the Cause of causes.

He alone is without limits, in time or in place, in goodness, knowledge, power, perfection. He Alone is without beginning or cause. He Alone is everywhere. He knows all, and can do all, and has unbounded beauty, majesty and glory. It is He Alone Who is so wise that He could not be wiser, so great that He could not be greater, so good that He could not be better. If He had any limits of any kind or in any direction, then He would be creature rather than Creator, and a sane human mind could not call Him God. If He had limits of any kind, He would be like this little material world which we at present dwell in, or like the much vaster spiritual world which He also created. If He had limits, then even our limited intelligence would tell us that He too must have been created, and would go past Him to find God.

All this is natural, sane reason, healthy common-sense. Faith, of course, and Christ's divine revelation, advance us much farther. But mind itself

even if unaided by faith and untaught by the Church, would affirm this unmistakably to all who will use their mind: that there is a cause for everything; that all lower causes have higher causes; that all higher causes have still higher causes; and so on and on: till thought rests at last in the Supreme Cause of causes,—Himself without cause, without beginning, without limits, infinite;—boundless in every direction and in every perfection; the Creating, Conserving Spirit; the All-Loving, All-Powerful God.

VII.—ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST.

(IV. SUNDAY OF ADVENT).

THE prophets had foretold many details in the life of our blessed Saviour hundreds of years before He was born. So they also prophesied that a messenger would come just before the coming of our Lord to prepare the way for Him. And this messenger whom the prophets spoke of, this "angel" whom God sent into the world before the Face of His Only-Begotten Son, this "voice of one crying in the desert: Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the wilderness the path of our God" (ISAÏ., XL., 3.), was St. John the Baptist.

His birth was fully as wonderful as the other events of his life. In the first place, it was announced to his father by an angel from heaven,—by that same angel Gabriel who was to bring the joyful tidings of the Incarnation to the Virgin Mary six months afterwards. The Gospel according to St. Luke gives us a beautiful account of this announcement.

It tells us about Zachary and his wife Elizabeth, that "they were both just before God, walking in all the commandments and justifications of the Lord, without blame. And they had no son" (LUKE, I., 6, 7). And one day when Zachary was in the temple offering incense," there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And Zachary seeing him, was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him: 'Fear not, Zachary, for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John: and thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice in his nativity. For he shall be great before the Lord and shall drink no wine nor strong drink: and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb. And he shall convert many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God and shall go before Him'" (LUKE, I., 11-17). Now this holy infant, whose birth was thus prophesied to his father Zachary by the angel Gabriel, was St. John the Baptist, who was to "go before" our Saviour and to prepare the way for Him.

He was "filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb," and this was shown in a miraculous manner in the mystery of the Visitation. St. Elizabeth, the mother of St. John the Baptist, was a cousin of the Blessed Virgin. And after "the angel of the Lord had declared unto Mary and she had conceived of the Holy Ghost," she went into the hill country to the home of Zachary to visit her cousin St. Elizabeth and to stay with her for three months. But when

"she entered into the house of Zachary and saluted" her cousin, "Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost and she cried out with a loud voice and said: 'Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the Fruit of thy womb! And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy'" (LUKE, I, 41-44).

Thus the infant John, "filled with the Holy Ghost even in his mother's womb," recognized his Saviour as soon as the Mother of God stood within the threshold of their home. And Mary made answer to her cousin and said: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Because He hath regarded the lowliness of His handmaid; for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. Because He That is mighty, hath done great things to me; and holy is His name. And His mercy is from generation unto generations, to them that fear Him." (LUKE, I., 46-50).

It was six months previous to this that Zachary had been struck dumb by the vision of the angel. Because Zachary had doubted the angel's words and had said: "'Whereby shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years.' And the angel answering, said to him: 'I am Gabriel, who stand before God; and am sent to speak to thee, and to bring thee these good tidings. And behold, thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be able to speak until the day wherein these things shall come to pass; because thou hast not believed my words, which shall be fulfilled in their time.' And the people were waiting for Zachary; and they wondered that he tarried so long in the temple. And when he came out, he could not speak to them: and they understood that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he made signs to them, and remained dumb." (LUKE, I, 18-22).

When St. John was born, Zachary recovered the use of his speech as miraculously as he had lost it, and he broke out into the praises of God. He was filled with knowledge from on high and, turning towards the new-born infant, he described his future mission and his greatness. "And thou, Child," he said, "shalt be called the prophet of the Most High: for thou shalt go before the Face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation to the people unto the remission of their sins,.....to enlighten them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to direct our feet into the way of peace" (LUKE, I., 76-79).

"And the child grew and was strengthened in spirit, and was in the deserts until the day of his manifestation to Israel" (I, 80). He had been cleansed from original sin, sanctified and filled with the Holy Ghost even before he was born. When he arrived at an age of discretion, he left his home and people and retired into the wilderness. It was the desert of the Jordan that he chose

for his retreat, a piece of barren, hilly country with the river Jordan flowing through it; here St. John took up his abode in a cave, clothed only in a single garment of rough camel's-hair; and here he led a life of the greatest mortifications, praying and meditating day and night, taking no food except locusts and the wild honey which he could find in the clefts of the rocks, and with only the river-water for his drink.

It was after more than twelve years of this severe preparation, that God made it plain to St. John that the great time had come at last and that he must begin his public mission. Then St. John commenced to preach repentance to the people. He told them that the kingdom of God was at hand, that the Messiah, Who had been promised and foretold and expected for thousands of years, was at length about to appear, and that they must prepare for His coming by turning away from their sins and doing penance. He converted thousands; for we read in the Gospels that "there went out to him all the country of Judaea and all they of Jerusalem and were baptized by him in the river of Jordan confessing their sins" (MARK, I, 5).

And one day when Jesus came among others, St. John pointed Him out to the people, saying: "Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him Who taketh away the sins of the world. This is He of Whom I said: After me there cometh One Who is prepared before me: because He was before me: the latchet of Whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose.-----He must increase, but I must decrease" (JOHN, I, 29, 30 and III, 30). Thus he humbly yielded place to the Messiah, of Whom he was only the forerunner and the herald. It was shortly after this that St. John publicly reprov'd King Herod for leading a life of shame, was arrested by that king, cast into prison and beheaded. And thus he whose birth had been so marvelous and whose life so wonderful and holy, died finally as a martyr for the truth.

This great saint should certainly be one of our models during the Advent season: for even as he and his disciples fasted and prayed in the wilderness in preparation for the coming of our Lord, so we now, if we are following out the spirit of the Church, are praying and doing penance for our sins to prepare ourselves for Christmas.

He was so great and so holy, that our Divine Lord called him "a prophet and more than a prophet" and declared that there "hath not risen among them that are born of women a greater then John the Baptist" (MATT., XI., 9, 11). He was so dear to our Saviour's Heart, that when Jesus was told about his death in prison, He took a boat and retired apart into a desert place as if to mourn His loss.

So great a saint and so wonderful a prophet will surely claim our homage. We cannot better pay this homage than by following the advice which St. John

gave to the multitudes who went out to listen to him when he was preaching in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of the Lord. Make straight His paths. Be converted from your sins and do penance.

May God grant us the grace to hearken to this advice. May He help us to be truly sorry for our sins, to make good Confessions and very frequent, even daily, Communion, and to do penance. May He grant us these favours through the intercession of St. John the Baptist; that so this Advent season may be for us what the Church intends it to be, a season of penance and of turning away from sin; and that the joy in our hearts on Christmas morning may be an innocent and a holy joy!

VIII.—GOD'S LONGING FOR OUR LOVE.

(CHRISTMAS.)

"Thou art beautiful above the sons of men: grace is poured abroad in Thy Lips; therefore hath God blessed Thee forever.

"Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O Thou most mighty!

"With Thy comeliness and Thy beauty, set out, proceed prosperously, and reign."—(Ps.XL, IV., 3-5).

TODAY we celebrate the feast of the Birth of our Divine Lord. We are glad and rejoice, remembering the goodness of God, remembering how the work of our redemption and salvation was begun by the Birth of the Babe of Bethlehem. We go back in spirit to that distant land where our Saviour was born, to that time so many hundreds of years ago. We see the simple scene in which the mystery of the Word made Flesh was perfected. And with the choirs of angels we give glory to God, and with the humble shepherds we adore and thank Him.

The Infant in the manger seems weak and feeble, but faith tells us that He is most mighty. He seems poor and lowly, laid there in His cheap swaddling-clothes, born among the brute cattle in the outhouse of a crowded inn; but we know that He is something different from what He seems: we know that He is a king and more than a king, Who has come to reign in peace and love over the universe which He created. And to this Divine Infant we address those words of the text: "Thou art beautiful above the sons of men: grace is poured abroad in Thy Lips; therefore hath God blessed Thee forever. Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O Thou most mighty! With Thy comeliness and Thy beauty, set out, proceed prosperously, and reign!"

For this feeble and lowly Infant is God. The Word has been made Flesh. The Creator has become a part of His Own creation. The Only-Begotten Son of God the Father has been made incarnate.

And this is the mystery of the Incarnation. Why should God, Who is all-powerful, put Himself into the weak and helpless condition of a new-born babe? Why should the Only-Begotten Son, Who is the object from all eternity of His Almighty Father's love, place Himself in a position where He would receive the jeers and contempt and hatred of the little men whom He had made? Why

should God, Who is perfectly happy in Himself forever and ever, wish to taste as it were of human sorrow and suffering, and why did He become man?

It was out of His desire to be loved by men. If we only realize that God's desire to gain our love is one of the motives for the Incarnation, then everything becomes clearer. It does not make the Incarnation a single degree less wonderful. It does not make the mystery any less a mystery. But it gives us some sort of an explanation and reason for it all. If we remember that God is moved by an intense desire to gain our love, then we begin to see why He stooped so low, why He endured such awful sufferings, and why He did so much more than was necessary to make satisfaction for our sins.

The end which God had in view was to gain our love. The means that He took towards that end, were His incarnation and His Life upon earth as man. Now when we see means well adapted to gain a certain end, we naturally conclude that they were chosen for that end; therefore let us see if the Incarnation of our Divine Lord is not perfectly adapted to win our love.

First of all, He takes our nature upon Himself. And what more powerful motive for love can there be than the bond of nature and the bond of kinship? How easy it is for people to love their parents, the members of their families, and all those who are connected with them by the ties of blood. Now here our Divine Lord makes Himself of kin to us. He comes down from Heaven to take our flesh and blood upon Himself. He becomes one of us, a child of Adam, according to the flesh, even as we are.

And then as man, He clothes Himself with everything that is fitted to win the love of men. He makes His entry into the world as a beautiful infant. Who does not love an innocent child? Often the hardest hearts will soften as they come in contact with these little ones, and the roughest men will sometimes grow gentle and tender when they approach a helpless infant. A little child brings into a household a perfect flood of light and love. Now our Lord today is a babe at Bethlehem. He has all the beauty of infancy, for He wishes to attract our hearts. He smiles, and stretches out His little Hands, as if inviting us to caress Him and to love Him.

From a great many children the loveliness of infancy departs as they advance in years. It was not so with the Christ-Child. The older He grew, the more lovable He became. He "advanced in wisdom and age and grace with God and men" (LUKE, II, 52). He was "beautiful above the sons of men: grace was poured abroad in His Lips." So that when He had reached the years of manhood, He was such a one that the children would gather around Him on the public streets, and strong men would be strangely moved by the words that fell from His Lips, and women, gazing at Him, would say in their hearts: "Blessed is the womb that bore Thee."

Relationship and innocence and beauty,—all these attractions should surely be sufficient to win our love; but our Divine Lord has been pleased to add to these the poverty and helplessness of His condition. It is natural for us, if we have a human heart, to love those who are helpless and dependent upon us. The sick children whom you have to nurse, the aged and feeble who need your care, the poor people who appeal to you,—nay, even the bird and the dog that look to you for food,—all come to have a place in your heart. Now our Saviour, in order to gain our love in this way at least, has placed Himself in a state of complete dependence upon us. From Bethlehem to Calvary, from the cradle to the grave, and even beyond the grave, He will look to us for the supply of every want.

Consider what it might have been. Think of the almighty power of God which is lying hidden there in that infant-form. Think of the millions of angels who are only chafing and restless to break the bounds that He has set for them and to be at His service. But no; He checks them; He will accept no help, no service during His life upon earth save that which He receives from men. For His swaddling-clothes He will depend upon His human Mother. St. Joseph shall pay the expenses of His boyhood's years. When St. Joseph dies, He will look to His human neighbors for the little jobs of work which are to keep Him and His blessed Mother alive in the carpenter-shop at Nazareth. And when He begins to preach, the holy women shall supply His wants. And when He is about to die, St. Mary Magdalen shall anoint His Body for burial, and Joseph of Arimathea will give Him a winding-sheet and a grave.

He will depend upon men for every want, in order to win the love of men. And even beyond the grave He will still depend upon us. He will look to us to supply Him with the churches, the priests, the altars which He needs to carry on His work, and even the bread and wine whose species veil His Real Presence at the holy sacrifice of the Mass; so that out of our love we may minister to Him, and by ministering to Him may learn to love Him more and more.

And as the Babe of Bethlehem would *win* men's love by His helplessness and dependence upon men, even so He *claims* our love by the vastness of the sacrifice which He has made for us. That Infant in the manger, with His uncomfortable surroundings, with only those scanty swaddling-clothes and the warm breath of brute animals to shield Him from the coldness of the midnight air,—the earth is His and the fullness thereof. The jewels in the treasury-vaults of kings and emperors, the palaces of the Caesars with their luxurious furnishings, the delights and happiness of heaven itself,—they all belong to Him. But He will have none of them. He will sacrifice them all to gain our love.

At the birth or the Christening of almost any child, if we could foresee all that it would have to suffer during its life, we would foresee enough to mingle

sadness with our joy. But this Divine Child is in a special manner a child of sorrow. Every limb of His Body, every faculty of His Soul, shall be sacrificed for us. On that little Head the crown of thorns shall rest. Through those tiny Hands and Feet the cruel nails shall be driven. From the pores of that soft Skin a bloody sweat of agony and anguish shall ooze out. The smooth Cheek shall be spitten upon. The little Ears shall be filled with reproaches and blasphemies. The delicate Throat shall swallow vinegar and gall. And why is all this? What is the motive for this awful sacrifice? He Himself tells us. "And I", He says, "if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself" (JOHN, XII., 32). That was the hope that urged Him on. That was the key to His whole life. He was conceived and born, suffered, was crucified, died and was buried in one mighty effort, one bitter struggle to gain our love.

It is our hearts that He seeks for. He desires our love with such intense desire as only God can feel, and yet He will not take it ungiven. He will leave to us the free will which He has granted, the free choice between good and evil. If we give to Him that love which He is seeking, He will receive it most graciously. If we prefer to withhold it from Him, He will not force us; but He will punish, of necessity, because He is the God of justice.

This is the lesson of Christmas Day. This was the plan of the Incarnation. It was to win the love of men that God came down from heaven and became a man Himself.

And how well the divine plan has succeeded, let the history of the Church inform us; let those thousands of saints tell us, who have gone up into heaven burning with the love of God, and those thousands of simple, believing souls who, although they cannot comprehend the arguments perhaps nor even read the books of religion, yet can understand the lesson of the crucifix and be moved by the story of the Babe of Bethlehem.

The prophecy of the text has been already fulfilled. The Babe of Bethlehem, the Victim of Mount Calvary, Jesus Christ our Lord, reigns by love over the souls of men, most mighty, most beautiful. "Thou art beautiful above the sons of men: **grace** is poured abroad in Thy Lips; therefore hath God blessed Thee forever. **Gird** Thy sword upon Thy Thigh, O Thou most mighty! With Thy comeliness and Thy beauty, set out, proceed prosperously and reign!"

May He reign in our hearts today and always, that by making us love Him more and more in this life, He may prepare us to love Him and be loved by Him forever and ever in the life to come.

IX.—ST. STEPHEN.

(CHRISTMAS NIGHT.)

EVERY year on the day after Christmas the Church celebrates the Feast of St. Stephen. It is only right that this great saint should be given great prominence. He was the earliest Christian martyr; for when Christ had shed His sacred Blood upon the cross for the salvation of men, St. Stephen was the first of all men to acknowledge that debt by shedding his blood for Christ. There have been many martyrs since his time. Even at the present day there are martyrs in savage lands, as there were martyrs in every age of the Church. Weak men and weak women, hundreds of thousands of them, have chosen to die by fire, by water, by scalding oil, by the sword and the wheel and the rack and by every kind of cruel torture, rather than deny Christ or commit a mortal sin. But St. Stephen is the leader of this glorious army in heaven, as he was the first of them all to lay down his life for Christ on earth.

The lives of most of the saints have been written by men, but St. Stephen's life is written in the inspired Word of God itself, and whatever we know about him, we know from the Sacred Scriptures.

The Holy Book tells us that even before he was ordained a deacon he was "a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost" (ACTS, VI., 5). If this was the case before his ordination, what must he not have been after he was ordained, when the graces which God had already given him were still further increased by the sacramental grace of Holy Orders. "Full of grace and fortitude. he did great wonders and signs among the people" (ACTS, VI, 8). Burning with zeal and love for his Divine Master, he preached Christ Crucified, and God confirmed his preaching by the power of miracles.

But Stephen was not to labour unopposed. The cruel men who had put our Saviour to death only four years before, were raging now against His apostles and disciples. They attempted to argue with St. Stephen, but "were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit which spoke" from his lips. And where reason failed, they called in force. They stirred up the people against him and had him arrested and dragged before their court of justice. "And they set up false witnesses who said: 'This man ceaseth not to speak words against the holy place and the law. For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the traditions which Moses delivered unto us'" (ACTS, VI., 13, 14). They could make no weightier accusation against him. The Jews were proud of their "holy place," proud of

their temple and most warmly attached to it; and the man who should threaten its destruction, was worthy of death in their eyes.

And St. Stephen, standing in the council before his judges, heard the charge and understood that his life was in danger. He knew that he could save his life by speaking the council fair, that he would lose it if he should dare to tell the truth. He had to choose between these two, and he chose nobly. The death of Christ was before his mind. The love of Christ was in his heart. The grace of God descended upon him and filled him with a courage more than human. And a miraculous light from heaven shone about him, so that "all who sat in the council," as the sacred Writings inform us, "looking on him, saw his face as if it had been the face of an angel" (ACTS, VI, 15). The martyr's spirit was in his breast, brave to give reasons for the faith that was in him, firm to stand by his principles and his religion, to live or die by them, no matter what the whole world might think or say or do.

Thus burning with zeal and strengthened by the grace of God, St. Stephen made answer to his accusers. Instead of defending himself, he attacked them. Boldly and plainly, without fear or favour, he accused them of all their misdeeds, of all their guilt. He laid before them the history of that stubborn and ungrateful nation to which they belonged, from the time of Abraham, their great ancestor, down to that very time. He told them how their forefathers had sold Joseph into Egypt as a slave, and how God had forgiven them for this. He told them how their forefathers had turned their backs upon Moses and the true God and had made false gods for themselves out of gold and silver, and how God had forgiven them for this also. He reminded them that the prophets, one by one, had been persecuted and slain by their forefathers,—those very prophets, whom they held most sacred,—those very prophets who had all spoken of the Just One, the Saviour, and foretold His coming. And finally, descending down to their own times, he announced to them that that Saviour had really made His appearance and that they, instead of welcoming His advent, had persecuted Him, and only four years ago had crucified Him.

But when he came to speak about our Saviour, whom these men had judged and crucified, St. Stephen was calm no longer. He was not thinking of himself nor of the danger to his life which he was incurring. He was thinking of God Who had created him, of the Saviour Who had died for him, and of the everlasting heaven which that Saviour had promised to those who should keep His commandments. He spoke with heat and fire, with righteous indignation and holy anger: "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised," he cried out; "you always resist the Holy Ghost. As your fathers did, so do you also. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain (those prophets) who foretold the coming of the Just One, of Whom you have been

even now the betrayers and the murderers. You who have received the law from the (hands) of angels, and have not kept it" (ACTS, VII, 51-53).

"Now hearing these things," the Scriptures say, "they were cut to the heart and they gnashed with their teeth at him." And beholding their angry faces, St. Stephen knew that the hour of his death was close upon him. And He did not dread the hour, but rather rejoiced at its approach; for "looking steadfastly up to heaven, he saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God."

He turned once more to his judges with joy and peace not of this earth beaming from his face. "Behold I see the heavens opened," he said, "and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God" (ACTS, VII, 54, 55).

They would not listen any longer, but covered their ears with their hands. They rushed upon Stephen with savage outcries and dragged him out of the judgment-hall and through the streets, until they had reached the city-gates. A tradition says that they brought him out by that very gate through which our Saviour had passed four years before carrying His cross. And being arrived outside the city walls, they laid aside their outer garments and stoned him.

The Acts of the Apostles in a very few words gives a most tender account of St. Stephen's dying moments. "They stoned Stephen," it tells us, "invoking and saying: 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.'" Just before he died, when his life had been crushed nearly out by the heavy stones which they hurled upon him, he spoke once more. He dragged himself painfully to his knees and cried out "with a loud voice, saying: 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.' And when he had said this,"—with those sweet words of love and forgiveness on his dying lips,—"he fell asleep in the Lord" (ACTS, VII, 59).

And thus the heroic, manly soul of the first Christian martyr passed away—from the anger of men to the peace of God.

Is there a lesson for us in the life of St. Stephen? Most assuredly there is. Every incident recorded in the Sacred Scriptures may teach us a lesson; and the life and death of St. Stephen should teach us a most powerful lesson. It should teach us to *value* our religion as the brightest and most precious gift which God has given to us. It should teach us not to yield one inch to those who attack it or who ridicule it; and never to place ourselves among those weak and cowardly souls who sell their birthright for a mess of pottage, and barter the Catholic faith of their fathers for freemasonry or Protestantism or atheism with worldly advancement and honours thrown in. It should teach us that death can be sweet; and that the worst of evils is not the death of the body but the death of the soul, the denial of Christ, and mortal sin.

May St. Stephen intercede for us, and obtain for us some small portion of his glorious faith, some little share of his splendid courage! May God grant us through his intercession to live for our religion, to live up to its spirit, and to suffer any evil, even death, rather than deny Christ by mortal sin.

X.—LIFE'S JOURNEY.

(NEW-YEAR'S DAY.)

“For behold, the short years pass away, and I am walking in a path by which I shall not return”(JOB., XVI., 23).

IT is more than three-thousand years since these solemn words were recorded by the inspired writer. And through that long stretch of time, through those more than thirty hundreds of years, these words come down to us with their beauty unwithered and their strength unimpaired, as true, as striking, as full of most solemn meaning to us at the beginning of this twentieth Christian century as they were to the holy patriarch Job when he spoke them. From us, as from him, “the short years pass away.” We also are “walking in a path by which we shall not return.”

And now that another of those short years has just departed, let us spend a few moments in glancing over that little road of human life which begins at the cradle and ends at the grave, that path in which we are so steadily going forward, but by which we shall never retrace our steps. Years are the miles of that journey, new-year's days are its mile-stones. It is a mounting path; for it begins in dust and ends in glory; it starts out from the valley of original sin and leads upwards, ever upwards to the heavenly summit. And so from any particular spot on this path of life we can see very far below and above. On any new-year's day we can turn our eyes backwards to where our journey began with birth, and forwards to where it will end with death. Looking backwards,—that is only too easy;—but to go backwards, even for one trifling mile. even for one short year, that is impossible.

“No backward path, ah! no returning;
No second crossing that ripple's flow!”

“For behold, the short years pass away, and I am walking in a path by which I shall not return.”

Surely the journey is short, some scores of years at longest. “The days of our years are three-score years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be four-score years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away”(Ps., LXXXIX, 10). Even in those exceptional lives that have stretched to a longer extent, the years are still short and few. “The days

of my pilgrimage are a hundred-and-thirty years, few and evil," said Jacob to King Pharaoh in ancient Egypt (GEN., LXVII., 9). Few indeed are the years of even the longest human life; for they are encompassed by two eternities, and they are lived in the presence of a God to Whom thousands of years are only instants. "I thought upon the days of old, and I had in my mind the eternal years" (Ps., LXXVI, 6). "In the beginning, O Lord, Thou didst found the earth, and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. They shall perish; but Thou remainest. And all of them shall grow old like a garment; and as a vesture Thou shalt change them, and they shall be changed. But Thou art always the selfsame, and Thy years shall not fail" (Ps., CI., 26-28. "Before the mountains were made or the earth and the world were formed, from eternity and to eternity Thou art God.....For a thousand years in Thy sight are as yesterday which is past" (JOB, LXXXIX, 2, 4).

Insignificant then and almost ridiculously short must the journey of life appear, especially to the thinking Christian who remembers eternity and forgets not God. As we stand here at this particular mile-post in the years, on this particular New-Year's Day, and cast our eyes about us, whether we look backwards to the cradle or forwards to the grave, downwards to birth or upwards to death,—the distance is only trifling. So at least the Christian thinks, while he compares time with eternity. But there are men and women who by great effort manage to forget God and eternity, and who consider this little life as all-absorbing and of prime importance. You meet them every day. You met them yesterday and you will meet them tomorrow—at your work, in business, in society, even in the schools and colleges and universities where those who sit in state *should* be teachers. You will read the newspapers which they write, the little magazines and reviews so pretty and frivolous, the novels, the plays, the books of so-called science, which they are daily issuing. Poor little worldlings, who have so far degraded their intelligence as to be able to think that "we are such stuff as dreams are made of" and that "our little lives are rounded by a sleep"! Despise, if you will, their opinions and theories, their pretentious ignorance and sonorous emptiness, but do not despise *them*. Pity them and pray for them. There are insects too which live but for a day. Morning sees their birth; evening is old age for them, and twilight death. No doubt they would think too, if they could think, that their little momentary experiences and occupations are all that this glorious universe was made for. And even these animalcules would be no more absurd in so thinking than the men and women who have no higher aspiration, no higher ambition, no higher belief and hope than are bounded in by the little span of this short path of earthly life.

And so, standing here on this New-Year's Day, at this point which we have

already reached in life's journey, let us look downwards over that trifling distance which we have covered. There below you is the valley of sin in which you were born. There is the baptismal font at which the first rays of glory shone upon you. And then, as the hill begins to rise, some years without a memory, some stages over which you were carried in your mother's arms. And at last the spot, some short way up life's path, where you began to walk for yourself. Then the first confession, where the dust and travel-stains of early childhood were washed away; the first Communion, whose date was the happiest day of the great Napoleon's life; the Confirmation-day, bright even yet as you look back upon it, where God poured down upon you enough grace for a lifetime through the Bishop's hands. And all the stages which you have traversed since then, all the short years which have passed away so rapidly one after another, all the new-year's days which have marked the successive miles of your life-journey. And in between these, the places where you fell so often, not entirely through weakness either, because strength sufficient was given to you, but through your own deliberate fault. And finally this point in the journey which you have just now arrived at, the New-Year's Day of the year of our Lord, Nineteen-Hundred-and-Thirteen.

It is impossible to look backwards over the path of life without sadness and regret:—regret for the childhood and youth, the beauty and strength that are forever flown;—regret for pleasures that are passed and friendships that have faded and friends who have departed;—but more than all, regret and sorrow for lost opportunities, and wasted graces, and uncharitableness towards our fellow men and women, and offences against God.

But if we except that deep sorrow for sin which we call contrition, all regrets are vain and profitless. "For past who can recall or done undo?" We may humbly confess that our "days were consumed in vanity and our years in haste" (Ps., LXXVII, 33). Yet there is no time for vain regrets, no time for melancholy and morbidness. We must pause only for an instant at this station in our journey; and then we must turn our backs once more upon the valley of sin, and cheerfully and with faith and full trust in God set forward toward the summit of glory.

No wonder if the journeying seem hard at times. It is no smooth and level meadow-path which we are strolling along. It is rather a steep, rough hill-side that we are laboriously climbing. Clouds will overshadow us, storms will beat upon us; but by a faith and hope and love which cannot be dismayed we will know that above them all the summit is shining with the glory of God. What obstacles must we yet overcome? We do not know. What trials shall we meet with? We cannot say. We cannot peer into futurity. We cannot see even for ten paces before us. The future is veiled from our eyes. Mists are

rising out of the dank earth. The heavy air is dense with fog. How long will be the journey? We cannot tell. How many more or how few more will be our New-Year's Days? We do not know. We only know that sometime, somewhere "man shall enter into the house of his eternity, and the mourners shall go round about in the street" (ECCLES., XII., 5).

Therefore as we toil up this rugged path of earthly life, and as we approach nearer and nearer to its terminus, let us ever have before our eyes and in our minds the goal towards which we are hastening, the end which is waiting for all of us. "The light is sweet, and it is delightful for the eyes to see the sun. But though a man live a multitude of years and have rejoiced in them all, he must remember the darksome time and the many days.-----Rejoice therefore, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart be in that which is good in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart and in the light of thy eyes; but know that for all these God will bring thee into judgment.-----Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the time of affliction come and the years draw nigh of which thou shalt say 'They please me not;' before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars shall be darkened;-----before the silver cord be broken, and the golden fillet shrink back, and the pitcher be crushed at the fountain,-----and the dust return into its earth from whence it was, and the spirit return to God Who gave it"(ECCLES., XI., XII.).

And starting off today on this newest stage of our life's journey, let us be mindful that "we are walking in a path by which we shall not return;" and let us resolve to tread this upward path so firmly that we shall not fall, so righteously that we shall not swerve to either side, so religiously that God's most special protection will be always over us. Courage, cheerfulness, and above all, religion, and you are secure of a safe journey. Thank God that we have in our hearts the true religion! Thank God that no social considerations, no worldly advantages, no fortunate marriage, no promise of riches or of business success could induce or even tempt us to swerve from it. And during this new year may He Who planted it in our souls confirm and increase it! For religion is the sun of life's journey; it is inspiration and illumination; it is warmth to the heart and light to the mind. No true morality, no sound and satisfying philosophy without religion: no religion worthy of the name except Christianity: no historical and consistent Christianity outside of the Catholic Church.

We must follow our various callings and live our various lives. We may take our share of the world's work, of the world's pleasures (in so far as they are innocent), of the world's successes (in so far as they are honestly ours). But woe to us if we forget that all these things are temporary and transient, as fleeting as the dust that is scattered by the wind.

"All the windy ways of men
Are but dust, that rises up
And is lightly laid again."

Physical culture, social culture, mind culture,—these are good for a time. Soul culture alone avails for eternity. And towards eternity we are all hastening, the good and the bad, the selfish and the charitable, the just and the unjust; and in eternity we shall all arrive.

May this New-Year's Day be a happy day for all of us! May the coming year be a holy and a happy year for every one! Perhaps it is a good omen that it commences on a Sunday (1911),—that we begin it, not on one of our bustling, worldly week-days, but on the Lord's day. May it be counted for us now and weighed in our favour at the great reckoning, when we shall have scored the last mile and climbed the last stage of life's short journey, and shall have reached the eternal resting-place.

There "shall the just stand with great constancy against those that have afflicted them and taken away their labours. These, seeing it, shall be troubled with terrible fear and shall be amazed, ----- saying within themselves (repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit): 'These are they whom we had some time in derision and for a parable of reproach. We fools esteemed their life madness and their end without honour. Behold how they are numbered among the children of God and their lot is among the saints. Therefore we have erred from the way of truth, and the light of justice hath not shined upon us, and the sun of understanding hath not risen upon us. We wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and destruction and have walked through hard ways, but the way of the Lord we have not known. What hath pride profited us? Or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us? All those things are passed away, like a shadow, and like a herald that runneth on; and as a ship that passeth through the waves, whereof, when it is gone by, the trace cannot be found nor the path of its keel in the waters; or as when a bird flieth through the air, of the passage of which no mark can be found, but only the sound of the wings beating the light air and parting it by the force of its flight: she moved her wings and hath flown through, and there is no mark found afterwards of her way; or as when an arrow is shot at a mark, the divided air presently cometh together again, so that the passage thereof is not known. So we also, being born, forthwith ceased to be, and have been able to show no mark of virtue, but are consumed in our wickedness.' Such things as these the sinners said in hell. For the hope of the wicked is as dust which is blown away with the wind, and as a thin froth which is dispersed by the storm, and smoke that is scattered abroad by the breeze, and as the remembrance of a guest of one

day, that passeth by. But the just shall live forevermore, and their reward is with the Lord, and the care of them with the Most High. Therefore shall they receive a kingdom of glory and a crown of beauty at the hand of the Lord; for with His right hand He will cover them and with His holy arm He will defend them" (WISD., V., 1-17).

XI.—THE EPIPHANY.

(OCTAVE OF THE FEAST.)

TODAY is the octave-day of the great feast of the Epiphany, and we could not find any better subject to meditate upon than this mystery of the three wise kings. Although the feast occurred a week ago, the Church is celebrating it still. It is one of those great feasts which have an octave, that is, which are celebrated by the Church, not only on the day on which they occur, but also for seven days afterwards. Every day of the week just passed the priests at Mass have been reading the gospel of the three wise men; and to-day, in order to complete the octave, the Church reminds us once more of this glorious mystery.

"Arise and be bright, oh! Jerusalem!", she sings in the Mass of the Epiphany, "because the glory of the Lord hath arisen over thee!" — "We have seen His star in the East, and have come with gifts to adore the Lord."—"The kings of Tharsis and the Island shall offer gifts; the kings of Arabia and Saba will bring presents; and all kings of the earth shall adore Him and all nations of the earth shall serve Him!"—For all these sayings in the Mass of the Epiphany refer to the three wise kings and the Divine Infant in the manger.

Now it is not without a purpose that the Church dwells so long upon this mystery of the Epiphany. She has several good reasons for doing so and for bringing it before the minds of her children again and again.

And in the first place, nothing can be more beautiful than the narrative in the Bible of the three wise kings. They lived in far-distant countries, but they had studied the Sacred Books of the Jews, and were probably aware from the prophecies contained in them that the time for the coming of the Messiah had arrived. It is most likely too that they had been praying to God all their lives to hasten the coming of the Saviour; for they must have been good men, whom God favored so highly. And so they went on praying and longing for the Messiah, until one night a miraculous star appeared in the heavens. The Magi saw the star, and understood at once that it was placed there by God as a sign, to show them that the Saviour was born and to lead them to His cradle. The Scriptures do not tell us how they knew it; a voice may have spoken to them out of the Star, or God may have told them in their hearts. We only know that in some way or other God made it plain to them that the Messiah was born at last. And so placing full faith in the Word of God and yielding full obedience to His command, they arose and followed the star.

It is beautiful to picture to ourselves the three wise kings travelling over the long distance which separated their native lands from the birth-place of Jesus. They rode on camels, at least during the latter part of their journey. They lost no time, but travelled as quickly as possible, resting only when it was strictly necessary in their tents or at the little inns along their way; for they were all eagerness to reach the blessed spot and to behold Him That was born King of the Jews. And all the time the star was guiding them onwards, until it had brought them to Jerusalem, the capital of that holy country in which our Lord was born. They entered the gates of the city, asking the people whom they met: "Where is He That is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East, and are come to adore Him" (MATT., II., 2). But they did not delay among the luxuries of that wealthy city nor rest themselves in the palace of King Herod. The star guided them out once more into the open country, and they followed it, journeying over the hills and valleys of Judaea, until they had reached the humble little village of Bethlehem. And when it rested there over the stable, they knew that the Saviour was within. So they entered, and adored the new-born Child, and laid their presents at His Feet.

Now in the second place, under all the beauty of this mystery, there is a deeper meaning which we must not miss. The three wise kings were in reality our representatives at the manger of Bethlehem. They represented the whole of that Gentile world, to which we belong. They were the first of all the Gentiles to offer their adoration and homage to the new-born Christ. From a Hebrew's point of view the whole earth was either Jew or Gentile. The Jews were a nation, scattered to a great extent in various parts of the world, but united still in their one religion and in their one nationality. All the other nations of the earth made up the Gentiles. The Jews worshipped the one true God. The Gentiles paid worship to a multitude of false gods, "changing the glory of the incorruptible God," as St. Paul said, "into the likeness of the image of a corruptible man and of birds and of four-footed beasts and of creeping things" (ROM., I., 23). The Jews had been taught by God and governed by Him for two-thousand years, while the Gentiles were groping in the darkness of idolatry. Now the Jews were the chosen people of God. It was to them that He made the promises, and especially the glorious promises concerning the Messiah. The patriarchs, the prophets, and all the other holy men whom we read about in the Old Testament, were Jews. St. Elizabeth, St. John the Baptist, and the apostles and evangelists without exception belonged to this nation. Our Blessed Lady was a Jewess by birth and descent. Our Divine Lord was born among them; and He Himself may be said to have been a Jew according to the flesh.

But Our Lord came to save the whole world; not the Jews alone, but the Gentiles as well. Before His coming the Jews had been God's chosen people

and the rest of the world were Gentiles. After His coming, Jews and Gentiles were to be God's people alike, for all were to enter into the kingdom of Christ by baptism and to be joined together as Christians. "For in one Spirit," St. Paul says, "were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free" (I. COR., XII., 13).

Even in the stable of Bethlehem our Saviour began His grand work. Even in His earliest infancy He received representatives from the distant nations of the Gentiles, the three wise kings whom the Church commemorates at Epiphany. And it is not strange that we especially, who are not of Jewish descent, should dwell long and lovingly upon this mystery; since the wise kings were the first individuals out of all the Gentile nations to which we belong, who placed themselves under the great Teacher and laid their gifts and their adoration at the feet of the Infant Jesus.

These then are two reasons which the Church has for dwelling so long upon the mystery of the Epiphany: first, the great beauty of that mystery, and secondly, its close connection with us, inasmuch as this was the first time that our Lord showed Himself to the Gentiles. There is yet one other reason. She wishes us to imitate the bright example which the three wise kings have set for us. They sought our Saviour with perseverance through every difficulty and danger; they entered His presence offering Him the most precious gifts; and they clung to Him to the end.

The Church desires that we too should seek our Saviour with perseverance. If we are separated from Him through our own fault, if sin fills up our souls and prevents Him from entering into them, we should persevere through every danger and difficulty, we should resist every grievous temptation and deprive ourselves of every sinful pleasure until we have made our peace with God and have found our Saviour once more. When the wise men found the Infant Jesus, they offered Him the most precious gifts they had at their disposal: gold for the King; frankincense for the God; and myrrh for the glorious human Body Which notwithstanding Its union with God was to die and be buried. In the same way we should offer Him the most precious gifts that we have to give; and there is no gift so precious in His sight as the gift of our hearts. Finally the wise kings, when once they had found the Infant Saviour, clung to Him to the end and did not give Him up. They did not betray Him to King Herod, but went back by a different way into their own country. And the Church desires us to imitate them in this also. She wishes us, when we have found our Saviour in the confessional and by repentance, to keep Him in our hearts, not yielding Him up at every difficulty nor betraying Him at every temptation, but persevering in His friendship watchfully and with earnestness to the very end. And in the name of her Divine Spouse she promises to all of her children who do this, whether they be Jews or Gentiles, unspeakable and everlasting happiness in the company of that same Divine Infant Whom the holy kings adored in the stable at Bethlehem.

XII.—FAITH.

(III. SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.)

AFTER curing the leper, who had thrown himself in His way with all the humility of true faith, our Lord passed on to the little town of Capernaum. When He had entered this town, a certain military officer met Him, saying: "Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, and is grievously tormented" (MATT., VIII., 1-13). He was a man of considerable importance in the town of Capernaum, being in command of the Roman garrison which was stationed there; and he knew through the great faith which he had in our Saviour that, as his own soldiers and servants obeyed every command he gave them, so our Lord had millions of invisible spirits who waited upon Him and hastened, so far as He allowed them, to carry out His slightest wish. When our Saviour therefore said: "I will come and heal thy servant," the centurion answered: "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof: but only say the word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man, (subject to authority), having under me soldiers; and I say to this one 'Go,' and he goeth; and to another 'Come,' and he cometh; and to my servant 'Do this,' and he doeth it." Jesus, hearing these words, marvelled at the great faith which he showed, and said to them that followed Him: "Amen, I say to you, I have not found so great faith in Israel." But to the centurion He said: "Go, and as thou hast believed, so be it done to thee." And the servant was healed at the same hour.

"As thou hast believed, so be it done to thee." These words, which our Lord addressed to the Roman military officer, are still His answer, and will always be His answer, to the prayers which are addressed to Him. Our prayers are granted in proportion to the faith with which they are offered up. Every day at morning and night, and perhaps during the day also, those of us who are practical Catholics say our prayers and ask God to shield us and protect us by His help and grace. Well; if these prayers are accompanied by faith, God's grace will descend upon us to strengthen and guide us; but if they were offered up without faith, they will receive no answer. "As we believe, so shall it be done to us." In proportion to the faith that is in us, shall be our advancement in grace and virtue and our value or worthlessness in the eyes of God.

Now what is faith? "Faith," says the inspired apostle St. Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not" (HEBR., XI., 1). Faith is the assent and the agreement of

the human mind to all those truths which God has revealed to man, on account of the authority of God Who revealed them. We cannot deny one of these revealed truths therefore, without disputing the authority of God. We must believe everything, or nothing. If we deliberately doubt one word which our Saviour has spoken, we practically doubt the whole of His teachings; and we cannot have real faith in an iota of the Church's doctrines, unless we have faith in every particle of them.

The virtue of faith may be called the foundation-stone of our religion, for the whole of our religion is built up upon it. We would have no religion at all, unless we first had faith, "Without faith," says the Apostle, "it is impossible to please God" (HEBR., XI., 6). This does not mean that men who have no faith, cannot perform any good action whatever. We see such men every day performing good actions. But their actions are only naturally good,—more intelligent and free, it is true, but no more supernatural, than the actions of the brute animals;—there is nothing above nature in them. In this sense, men without faith may sometimes, although very rarely, succeed in leading a really good life; but they can never live a supernaturally religious life. Now and then we may find such men temperate and just and pure. Even before the birth of Christ there were some persons who cultivated honesty and sobriety and the other natural virtues and who obeyed fairly well the laws of nature, and there may always be a few who will succeed in doing this. But without faith they can go no farther; without faith men can neither accomplish anything which is above nature, nor lead a life which is fully pleasing and meritorious for eternal life in the sight of God. It is impossible for us to perform any supernatural action without this virtue; and if our faith should once begin to waver and was overthrown, our whole religion would crumble with it, until nothing of it was left to us.

Now there was never a time since the beginning of the Church, and scarcely ever a civilized country on the face of the earth, where this virtue of faith was wanting to a greater extent than it is at the present time and in this country of ours. The infidels and free-thinkers among us are increasing in number day by day. What a vast proportion of our non-Catholic neighbors have no faith whatever, in matters of doctrine at least, but only convictions and opinions and guess-work! And with all this unbelief and free-thinking around us, it is only natural that even among ourselves, that even among the children of Catholics, there should be some who are in danger of losing the faith which their forefathers have held to for so many centuries. The want of faith, unbelief, is raging like a plague among us and ravaging the souls of men. It is more common with the young than with the old. Often young men and young women, for the very reason that they are young, are likely to have less respect for

their teachers and superiors, less judgment and less common-sense than older men and women. Being thus weaker, they give up their religion more readily. And so it happens that all over our country at the present day, here as well as in other places, there are many young men and young women who are slowly drifting away from the faith of their fathers.

They wish to be thought followers of Christ and Catholics, but they consider it beneath their dignity to believe humbly in the teachings of Christ and of His Church. This man is a Catholic (he will tell you), but he has his doubts about eternal punishment. That man calls himself a Catholic too, but he cannot admit the infallibility of the pope. And so they dispute this point and that point, claiming to be Catholics all the time, and forgetting that they are not and cannot be Catholics while they doubt one tittle of the Word of God or dispute the smallest portion of the Church's teachings.

From doubting in matters of doctrine they go on to criticizing in matters of discipline. If a priest is opposed to cheap fairs and indecent dances, they declare that he is unreasonably strict and severe. If a plenary council decides that we should have Catholic schools for our Catholic children, there are too many people rash enough to proclaim by their actions, if not by their words, that the council must have made a mistake. If the Pope legislates in favour of frequent and daily Communion for even the youngest children, they ignore his rulings or actively oppose them. And thus neither priests nor bishops nor councils nor pope escape their judgment.

At the same time, all this doubting and criticizing on the part of these so-called Catholics does not come from any new insight into matters of religion, which they have obtained and which their fathers were lacking. They have no more brains than their fathers had, and much less judgment and common-sense. But for what they are lacking in judgment, they make up by vanity and rashness; and they display their rashness in a most reckless and ridiculous manner when they attempt to criticize and pass sentence upon subjects that are as far above their comprehension as the sun is above the earth. They are mostly young men and young women neither of extraordinary talents nor of an uncommon education. They do not do any thinking worthy of the name. They have never learned to think deeply or solidly. They have few opinions of their own on any subject whatever; and they simply take their opinions from the people around them, as they might take the cut of their coats or the style of their hats, in order to be in the fashion.

Outside of the Church it is more or less fashionable at the present day to aim at doubting everything, from our own existence up to the existence of God, and at criticizing even the most venerable institutions and even the most sacred persons; and that is one of the reasons why these Catholic youths (so-called)

have so many doubts and so many grievances. They follow blindly with the crowd without much knowing or caring where they are going. They gaze so long and so fixedly upon the little things of this life, that the great things of eternity become invisible to them. They could look upon the sun if they chose, but they prefer to blind their eyes with the dust of the earth. And so they forget God, give up the practice of their religion, and finally lose the faith itself.

Now what will become of these unworthy children of Catholics, when their faith thus weakens, or when they lose the faith entirely? Our Divine Lord tells us in the gospel of today: "As they have believed, so shall it be done to them;"—so shall it be done to them in this life, and so shall it be done to them in the life to come.

Briefly we might divide them into two classes. The first class would be made up of those who are unfortunate in the eyes of the world; the second of those who in the eyes of the world are fortunate.

Those who are unfortunate in the eyes of the world, after losing their faith, generally lose all shame and self-respect too. Often they become loafers, thieves, street-walkers, who pass one-half of their time in haunts of vice and the other half in the jails. They encumber the earth for some years perhaps with their useless and noxious presence and then, after torturing themselves and others in their miserable lives, finish up their course by filling an unhonoured grave.

But in the second class, those who are fortunate in the eyes of the world, are too shrewd to ruin themselves at once with vice and bad habits. Many of them lead steady, regular lives, wanting only in religiousness, attend to business, marry comfortably, and get along in the world.

Yet no matter what these unworthy children of Catholics may profess to be,—no matter whether they remain nominal Catholics, or give up even the semblance of their faith to become freemasons or Protestants,—they are all alike unhappy. They have lost that precious inheritance which Christ died to purchase for them and which their forefathers have carefully handed down to them through so many centuries; and though they be sound in health and fortunate in their family connections, though they be prosperous in business and cheerful in their outward demeanor, there is gloom at the heart; there is a worm of remorse at the conscience; they can never be happy. They have made shipwreck of their faith and have thus deprived not only themselves, but their children and their children's children, of the most precious gift which God has given to man.

May their bad example, instead of injuring us by inducing us to imitate it, be rather as a beacon-light to show us the rocks which they were wrecked upon, warning us to listen to the Church always like humble and obedient children, to guard our faith jealously, and to strengthen it by putting it into daily practice.

May we neither follow them in their rashness and folly, nor share with them in their everlasting wretchedness. But may we rather follow in the footsteps of our fathers, as humble, earnest imitators of the saints of God; so that when the shadows of death shall darken over us, we may be able sincerely to repeat those noble words of the great Apostle: "I am even now ready to be sacrificed and the time of my dissolution is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith! As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just Judge, will render to me" (II. TIM., IV., 6-8).

XIII.—“PEACE, BE STILL!”

MATT., VIII., 23-27.

(IV. SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.)

THE sea upon which our Lord worked this beautiful miracle, was not the ocean, but the sea of Gennesareth, which is also called the lake of Galilee. Our Divine Lord never saw the ocean during His mortal life. It is probable that He looked more than once upon the wide waters of the Mediterranean; but He never came within even a thousand miles of the ocean proper.

It was on or near the shores of the lake of Galilee that He passed the greater portion of His days. It was from the fishermen who made their living by dragging their nets for fish through the waters of that lake that He chose His apostles. It was across those waters in their fishing-boats that He sailed so often to and fro.

“The lake of Galilee,” “the sea of Gennesareth,” “the sea of Tiberias,”—these are three different names for the one body of water: a very large lake,—thirteen miles long by six miles wide,—large enough surely to be properly called a sea; and its storms are almost as dangerous to small craft as the storms of the ocean itself, because very often fierce winds and gales rush down suddenly upon it from the cliffs and high tablelands along its eastern shore.

It was probably calm and serene that evening when our Saviour started to cross it with His disciples.

He was weary from overwork. It was at a time in His career when He could not go near Capernaum or any other of the lake-cities without having the people crowd and crush around Him until they trod on one another in their desire to get near Him. “For He healed many,” St. Mark says, “so that they pressed upon Him to touch Him, as many as had evils, And the unclean spirits, when they saw Him, fell down before Him: and they cried, saying ‘Thou art the Son of God’” (MARK, III., 10-12). If He entered a house in those days, the multitudes surrounded it and almost forced their way in, bringing their sick with them to be cured. If He went down to the lake and seated Himself near the beach, they thronged about Him there, until He would have to step into a boat and push off a few feet from the shore and preach to the crowds from this floating pulpit. Some times, St. Mark tells us, He could not find time to take food. Sometimes He would go without sleep. They wanted to be near Him, to touch even the hem of His garment and be healed, to bring Him their sick, to hear

His preaching and behold His miracles. Oftentimes He could only escape from the crowds and obtain the needed rest by crossing the lake, a six miles' sail, from the populous western side of it with its half-a-dozen busy little cities to the lonely cliffs which rose up steep and barren from its eastern shore.

So it was on that evening of the miracle. It would seem from the accounts of the three evangelists that it was the same day in which He had cured the centurion's servant. "And when evening was come," St. Matthew says, "they brought to Him many that were possessed with devils: and He cast out the spirits with His word: and all that were sick He healed.-----And Jesus, seeing great multitudes about Him, gave orders to pass over the water" (MATT., VIII., 16-18). Then when a certain scribe said to Him: "Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou shalt go," Jesus saith to him: "The foxes have their holes and the birds of the air their nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head" (19, 20). So "He went into a little ship with His disciples, and He said to them: 'Let us go over to the other side of the lake.' And they launched forth" (LUKE, VIII., 22). Our Lord took His place in the stern. There He rested His divine head on the rough leathern cushion of the steersman and was soon fast asleep. And then occurred the miracle of today's gospel, one of the most beautiful miracles which He ever performed during the whole of those three years of wonders. For while He was sleeping soundly after the toils of the day, and while the disciples were attending to the sails and directing the vessel's course, there came up one of those sudden storms which make the sea of Gennesareth so dangerous. The winds blew down fiercely from the eastern mountains bringing black clouds and pelting rain with them; the calm waters roughened more and more and raged and roared until the waves began to dash over the vessel's sides. Still our Divine Lord slept peacefully, and the disciples through reverence for the Master and through pity for His fatigue did not waken Him. But the danger grew greater and greater. The angry waters poured into the little ship so as almost to fill her. And it was only when they feared every moment that the vessel would sink from beneath their feet, that they rushed to the stern where He was, and threw themselves down around Him and cried out in their panic fear: "Lord, save us, we perish!"

Then our Divine Saviour opened His eyes. He glanced out so calmly, with so little trouble or anxiety, that they said to Him, as St. Mark tells us: "Master, doth it not *concern* Thee that we perish?" (MARK, IV., 38). But He said to them: "Where is your faith?" (LUKE, VIII., 25)—"Have you not faith yet?" (MARK, IV., 40)—"Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith!" (MATT., VIII., 26). And rising up, "He commanded the winds and the sea" (MATT., VIII., 26). "He rebuked the wind and the rage of the water" (LUKE, VIII 24) "and said to the sea: 'Peace, be still!' And the wind ceased: and there was made a great calm" (MARK, IV., 39). The blue sky shone out once more with

its sprinkling of bright stars, the tempest abated, the troubled waters became still and clear in obedience to His words. And they feared exceedingly: and they said one to another: "Who is this, that he commandeth both the winds and the sea!" (LUKE, VIII., 25)—"What manner of man is this, for the winds and the sea obey him!" (MATT., VIII., 27).

The Fathers and Doctors of the Church have never tired of drawing lessons from this beautiful miracle. They loved to show in how many different ways since that evening on the lake our Divine Saviour has calmed the storm.

Thus when Christ's Church has been in serious danger at various times in her history—from the pagan emperors of the first centuries, from the Arian heretics of the fourth, from the Protestants and Mohammedans of the sixteenth century or the infidels of the eighteenth,—always at the very moment of direct peril He has risen up in His power and rebuked the winds and said to the angry waters: "Peace, be still;" and the Church has come out of her trials and out of the storm more buoyant and hopeful than she ever entered into them. For Christ Himself directs the Bark of Peter; and she can never sink nor founder, but must sail on triumphant through all the storms of all the centuries. So long as time lasts and earth endures, the Church is bound to live and to breast the waves. And neither the kings and princes of earth nor the demons of the pit, neither secret societies nor open foes, neither the hatred of men nor the malice of devils nor the powers of this world nor the gates of hell shall ever prevail against the Church. For Christ Himself is with His Church "all days even to the consummation of the world" (MATT., XXVIII., 20), stilling the storms which beat upon her and calming the waters before her prow.

Thus too with our individual souls. Many are the storms which we must weather during our voyage across this little sea of earthly life. Clouds of discouragement will blacken the air around us until we are almost ready to despair. Tempests and hurricanes of temptation will sweep down upon our souls and threaten to engulf them in mortal sin and in the bottomless abyss. Those are the times to prove our faith! Those are the moments in which to ask ourselves. "Where is your faith?—Have you not faith yet?—Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith!" When the storm is at its height and there is nothing around us save angry winds and raging sea,—that is the very time to remember that Christ is with us still, even though He may seem to be sleeping, and to throw ourselves down at His blessed feet, crying out in our helplessness and our necessities: "Lord, save us, we perish!"

In all the storms of life may we strive to do this. In storms of affliction, in storms of pain and suffering, in storms of discouragement and in storms of temptation let us always cry out to Him. And He will hear our cry, and in all the majesty of His almighty power He will command the winds and the waves until there come a great calm. And through that calm He Himself will safely steer us across the sea of life, even to the everlasting shore.

XIV.—GOOD AND EVIL.

MATT., XIII., 24-30.

(V. SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.)

THE gospel of today contains one of those short stories or parables which our Saviour was in the habit of telling to His disciples.

A certain man, our Saviour told them, sowed good seed in his field. But this man had an enemy who was watching for a chance to do him an evil turn; and the enemy came in the night-time when everyone was asleep, and sowed bad seed in that same field where the good seed had been planted. And when the springtime came, the master went out to look at his field. He found that the wheat which he had sown, was springing up; but in the midst of the wheat was growing a lot of cockle, the bad seed which his enemy had planted, a useless weed which spoiled the wheat and stunted it in its growth. Then the owner of the field knew that his enemy had worked this mischief, and he said "An enemy hath done this." But when his servants asked him whether they should go and pull up the bad seed, he said: "No, because if you try to gather up the cockle, you might pull up the wheat together with it."—"Suffer both to grow until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers: 'Gather up first the cockle and bind it into bundles to burn, but the wheat gather ye into my barn'."

Now having told this parable to His disciples, our Divine Saviour went on immediately to explain it. The field which He spoke of, is this world, in which good and evil seed are flourishing. The good seed are good Christians who try to please God. The wicked, who are always offending God, are the bad seed. God is the owner of the field, who planted the good seed. His enemy, who sowed the bad seed, is the devil. The angels are the reapers, and the harvest will be the end of the world.

For just as the owner of the field planted good seed in it, so God created this world and in it as in a field, He planted good seed. Evils have crept into it since then, sin and death, sickness and misery, but it was not from God that they came. No evil has ever come from the hand of God. He created this world as a place of innocence and happiness. In the same spirit He created the man and woman, our first parents. He made them good and happy, free from sin and weakness, from death and sickness and every other misery which human beings have to suffer; and it was God's plan that they and their children

should remain happy until the end of time. Thus God created this world, and in it as in a field He planted nothing but good seed.

But as the enemy came in the night-time and "oversowed cockle among the wheat," even so the devil, God's enemy, came into this world; and where God had planted good seed, he planted the seeds of woe and misery. Satan entered this world and tempted our first parents to sin; and when sin had gained an entrance, then every evil followed it.

And now "the blade has sprung up," and the two kinds of seed which were planted, have borne their fruit, and in this world there is a mixture of good and evil. Aptly then does our Divine Lord compare this world to the field where cockle was growing among the wheat; because there is evil in this world as well as good, there are sinners and just men, mingled together, living side by side, waiting for the harvest. Wherever there is innocence, near to it there will be guilt; wherever there is happiness, near to it there will be misery; health and sickness, sighs and laughter, smiles and tears, are very close together in this world of ours, and always will be to the end of time. And what is true of these, is true also of the people who dwell upon the earth; for while there are plenty of good Christians in this world who always try hard to keep the commandments and to please God, there are also great numbers of wicked men and women who think nothing of committing mortal sins again and again, and who thus defy the will of God and despise His mercy and His justice.

And the angels of God, when they behold this bad seed growing in their Master's field, when they see these hardened sinners in His world insulting Him day after day,—they go to God, like the servants in the parable, and say to Him: "Wilt Thou that we go and pluck up this bad seed out of thy field—wilt Thou that we descend like lightning and remove these hardened sinners from out of Thy world, and 'destroy Thy enemies before Thy face?'" But out of His infinite mercy and patience God answers them: "No. Wait until the harvest. Let the sinner have time for repentance. Let the sinner have time to turn back to that God Whom he has forsaken. Let them grow until the harvest. And in the time of the harvest I will say to My reapers: 'Gather up the bad seed first and bind it into bundles to burn, but the good seed gather ye into My barn'. At the end of the world I will give orders to My angels: 'Gather up the hardened, unrepentant sinners and bind them and burn them, but the just gather ye into My heavenly Kingdom'."

Like a loving father God waits for His erring children to turn back to Him and do penance for their sins; but He will not wait forever. It is only for a while that "He maketh His sun to rise upon the good and the bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust" (MATT., V., 45). For a little time the good seed and the bad may grow together; for a short space the hardened sinner and the

just man may flourish side by side; but soon the harvest will come, and the good seed will be gathered into the Master's barn, and the evil seed will be bound up to burn in the everlasting fire.

That harvest-time will come to each one of us, and "no man knoweth the day nor the hour." It is near enough to all of us, and very near to some. It is waiting for us, hidden in the future, it may be tomorrow, it may be a year from tomorrow; and therefore let us keep ourselves always ready for it. Let us avoid every grievous sin, and even smaller sins in as far as we can; so that when that dreadful moment comes, we may be gathered, not into "the furnace of fire where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (MATT., XIII., 42), but into the realms of everlasting happiness where "the just shall shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (43).

XV.—THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

MATT., XIII., 31-35.

(VI. SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.)

THE mustard-plant is a good example of great results from small beginnings. It springs from a very small seed, and it grows to be a very large herb. It was common too in the country of our Divine Lord, and familiar to the eyes of His hearers. Even where they were listening to Him that day they could see these plants flourishing in the meadows around them. Many of them had often planted the little mustard-seeds, and had themselves watched them afterwards growing day by day until they became a herb large enough to be properly called a tree.

Now our Lord always used illustrations and examples which would be familiar to the minds of His hearers. Familiar examples make a lesson better understood and better remembered. Hence again and again He would enforce His lessons and doctrines with parables drawn from the plainest and homeliest objects, the very objects which they were most familiar with in their everyday life.

So on that day, when He desired to give them some idea of how His work, His kingdom, His Church was going to spread and grow in the course of time, there was no more striking example at hand than the big mustard-plants flourishing there so plentifully before their very eyes. So far as their experience went, the mustard-seed was "the least of all seeds;" and yet it grew up, as they could easily see, into the greatest of all herbs. So would it be with His kingdom, "the kingdom of heaven." It was small at that time, very small and insignificant,—only a few hundred farm-servants and fishermen,—a few hundred of God's poor; but give it time, and it would grow and grow; it would take in entire tribes and entire nations; it would spread out over the whole earth; and would not even stop with this earth, but would also people purgatory with holy souls, and gradually fill up heaven itself.

Our Divine Lord was not accustomed to name it "His Church," but nearly always "His kingdom." Sometimes He would call it "the kingdom of God," sometimes (as in today's gospel) "the kingdom of heaven," and very often simply "the kingdom." According to St. Matthew "Jesus went about all Galilee-----preaching the gospel of the kingdom" (MATT., IV., 23). "And this gospel of the kingdom," our Saviour said, "shall be preached in the whole world for a

testimony to all nations, and then shall the consummation come" (MATT., XXIV., 14). And on another occasion: "If I by the Spirit of God cast out devils, then is the kingdom of God come upon you" (MATT., XII., 28). And there are scores of passages like these in the New Testament, where He thus uses the word "kingdom" to denote what we nowadays call His Church.

In fact, the Church is a kingdom, and its Head, our Divine Lord, is a king. He is not a president, elected by popular vote: "you have not chosen Me," He said, "but I have chosen you" (JOHN, XV., 16). He is a king, the Only-Begotten Son of His almighty Father. And it was as a king that the Chosen People expected Him. For hundreds of years before He was born the word "Messiah" was scarcely commoner on Hebrew lips than the phrase, "the kingdom of the Messiah." Six-hundred years before His birth the prophet Daniel had plainly prophesied His kingdom: "And lo," he said, "One like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and He came even to the Ancient of days: and they presented Him before Him. And He gave Him power, and glory, and *a kingdom*: and all peoples, tribes and tongues shall serve Him: His power is an everlasting power that shall not be taken away: and His kingdom (a kingdom) that shall not be destroyed" (DAN., VII., 13, 14).

Still more beautifully did this same great prophet describe the Church of Christ in his interpretation of the famous dream of King Nabuchodonosor. Nabuchodonosor was king of Babylonia, the oldest of the four great world-empires of ancient history; and Daniel the prophet, a Hebrew captive, lived in his time and at his court. Now the king had had a dream; and he was so troubled by it, that when he woke up, the dream fled out of his memory. Therefore the prophet was required first to tell him what the dream had been, and afterwards to explain its meaning.

"Thou, O King, didst begin to think in thy bed what should come to pass hereafter", the prophet said to him; "and He That revealeth mysteries, showed thee what shall come to pass.-----Thou, O King, sawest, and behold there was, as it were, a great statue-----and the look thereof was terrible. The head of this statue was of fine gold, but the breast and the arms of silver, and the belly and the thighs of brass, and the legs of iron; the feet part of iron and part of clay. This thou sawest; till a stone was cut out of a mountain without hands: and it struck the statue upon the feet thereof that were of iron and of clay, and broke them in pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver and the gold broken in pieces together, and became like the chaff of a summer's threshing-floor: and they were carried away by the wind: and there was no place found for them: but the stone that struck the statue, became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth" (DAN., II., 29-35).

Then when the king, bowing his head, had signified to Daniel that he recog-

nized his dream, the prophet went on to explain its meaning for him. The gold, the silver, the brass and the iron of the statue represented the four great empires which were to hold sway, one after another, over the entire known world of their times. The statue's "head of fine gold," for example, was the Babylonian empire, the empire of King Nabuchodonosor. The "breast and arms of silver" were the great Persian empire, which conquered and succeeded the Babylonian. The brass empire was the huge but short-lived Macedonian empire of Alexander. And the empire of iron, stronger, better organized, and longer enduring than the others, was the great Roman empire, which was at the very height of its power and glory six-hundred years after Nabuchodonosor's time, when our Divine Saviour was crucified.

But the Stone in the king's dream, "cut out of a mountain" without the aid of human hands;—which struck the feet of the statue, "and broke them in pieces," and sent the whole huge bulk of it crashing down, and crushed the gold and silver and brass and iron, all alike, into dust and chaff;—the stone, which afterwards "became a great mountain" and itself "filled up the whole earth;"—was the Church of Christ. It was the kingdom of God, which Christ would establish upon this earth six-hundred years after Nabuchodonosor had dreamed his dream and Daniel had interpreted it. It was the kingdom of the Messiah, which would gaze calmly down on the ruins of the four great world-empires; and would see the beginning and the end of so many other empires and kingdoms later on. And even as it would "fill the whole earth," Daniel said, so it would last for all time and "never be destroyed." If the time ever comes when kingdoms and empires shall be no more upon this earth and emperors and kings shall be almost-forgotten things of the past,—if the time ever comes when, even as we proud citizens of a great republic bend our knee to no earthly king, but only to the omnipotent God, so neither shall the citizens of any other region of this fair earth,—if that time ever comes,—the indestructible Church will still be there, slowly and gradually through the long ages of her destiny sweeping on mankind to enlightenment and liberty and happiness in this world, and to eternal happiness in the next. "In the days of those kingdoms," said the prophet as he finished explaining the king's dream, "the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed. And His kingdom shall not be delivered up to another people. And it shall break in pieces and shall consume all these kingdoms, and itself shall stand forever" (DAN., II., 44).

Thus Daniel prophesied about the Church of Christ six-hundred years before Christ was born. Thus he described it, founded by no human hands, rising upon the ruins of earthly empires, growing until it should fill the whole earth, and enduring forever. And thus the Hebrew people looked forward to it and

longed for it. For centuries and centuries the more pious and thoughtful among them prayed that God would hasten the coming of the Messiah and of His kingdom. Too many of them, it is true, misunderstood the prophecies through their own fault, and supposed that Christ would be an earthly monarch using earthly methods, a glorious world-conqueror like Cyrus or Alexander or Caesar; and that His kingdom would be a magnificent world-empire with its capital at Jerusalem, and the whole earth paying tribute to Judaea, and they its nobles and grandees. And when He disappointed these material expectations,—when He came, humble and lowly, and lived in poverty and died in ignominy,—even though He had fulfilled every iota of all the prophecies, and had proved beyond a doubt by the plainest arguments and the grandest miracles that He was all that He claimed to be,—the God-with-us, the Expected One, the Christ,—they rejected Him. He told them that His kingdom was not material, but spiritual. “My kingdom is not of this world,” He said (JOHN, XVIII., 36); and they, who were too ignoble and grovelling to give their faith and love to anything higher than this world, failed to believe in Him.

Nevertheless His kingdom grew and flourished. Like that little seed of today’s gospel which develops into such a large herb, so the Church of Christ, starting out from small beginnings, has already arrived at gigantic proportions. It began in an obscure corner of the Roman empire; it has spread since then into every region of the earth. It began with a few simple fishermen; it includes now the very best by far of the world’s intellect and culture. It began with the one-hundred-and-twenty persons who were gathered around St. Peter in the upper chamber, waiting for the descent of the Holy Ghost; it embraces now the three-hundred-million men and women who are swayed by the gentle rule of St. Peter’s successor, our venerable Holy Father, Pope Pius the Tenth.

And let us always remember that what we see of it on this earth, is only one small portion of this kingdom of Christ. For this kingdom includes not only us who are at present struggling here “in this valley of tears,” but also the millions upon millions who have gone before us “in the way of peace” (LUKE, I., 79): the myriads of holy souls in purgatory; the myriads of saints and blessed ones who are already triumphing in heaven. The Church Militant or Struggling on earth, the Church Suffering in purgatory, the Church Triumphant in heaven: these are the three great provinces which together make up this glorious kingdom of Christ.

And the end is not yet. Scarcely two-thousand years have yet passed by since our Saviour founded His Church. It is only God Who knows how many more thousands of years may roll over the earth, before the judgment-day comes to put an end to that Church’s growth and development. When that day arrives, and God shall have completed the number of His chosen ones,—

when "He shall send His angels with a trumpet and a great voice, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest parts of the heavens to the utmost bounds of them" (MATT., XXIV., 31),—then finally the Church Struggling and the Church Suffering will both be merged forever and ever into the Church Triumphant;—then at last, in every sense of the words, the kingdom of Christ will be for all eternity "the kingdom of heaven."

And so when we pray each day, as He Himself taught us, "Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name! Thy kingdom come!", we pray that His kingdom may gradually fill up the whole earth; that the little mustard-seed which He planted, may grow and grow; that we ourselves, even though we are so small and weak, may daily help with the millions of others to carry on and so bring to completion the glorious work which He began:—so that His kingdom may come and His sweet and adorable Will be done "on earth, as it is in heaven."

XVI.—THE ELEVENTH HOUR.

MATT., XX., 1-16.

(SEPTUAGESIMA.)

THE penny mentioned in the parable, is not the present-day copper coin, but the old silver penny formerly current in England and worth about seventeen-cents of our present money. Even seventeen-cents would be poor pay with us; but in our Divine Lord's time and country clothes and food were so very cheap, that the silver denarius or penny was considered a fair day's wages. And so when the house-holder or landed proprietor of the parable, the owner of the vineyard, went out in the early morning and offered this wages, he found many laborers who were willing to take it. He found no lack of laborers either, when he went out again at nine o'clock, and again at noontime, and at three, and finally at five o'clock in the afternoon. From each of these trips to the market-place he came back bringing many laborers with him into his vineyard.

Now according to the law of Moses laborers had to be paid each day. Weekly and monthly payments were forbidden, "but thou shalt pay him the price of his labour the same day, before the going down of the sun" (DEUT., XXIV., 15). And when the owner of the vineyard in the parable came to pay the laborers their wages that day, the strange thing about it was, that one of them received as much as another. He gave the same day's wages to those who had been working only an hour or two, that is, from five o'clock, which he gave to those who had been toiling all day long from early morning.

Neither had these latter any good reason to complain, for he did what he had agreed to do. They received all that was due to them. They received the day's wages which they had agreed to work for; and if he chose to give others more in proportion, he didn't steal it from them in order to give it. So they had no good grounds in justice for complaining; but it was rather envy of their fellow-laborers which made them murmur against the master. He could well answer them: "Friend, I do thee no wrong.-----Take what is thine and go thy way."

Now God is the owner of the vineyard, and we are the laborers; and "this parable was made." says St. John Chrysostom, "to quicken the zeal of those who are converted late in life, so that they would not suppose that they were going to have less reward than others." The reward is all in God's hands

and His is the disposal of it. It is for Him that we are working; it is He Who has promised to pay us our wages. "For the wages of sin is death; but the grace of God life everlasting" (ROM., VI., 23). We would be bound to serve Him anyway, even without wages. He made us and owns us; and far more strictly than children are bound to obey and serve their parents, even when those parents have no inheritance and no money to leave them, we are bound to serve God even though He had promised us no recompense.

And He is calling us to that service from morning until night, from birth until death, from the first until the eleventh hour. "Many are called, but few are chosen." From our earliest youth to our extreme old age He is calling us into His vineyard.

Before you were born Christian fathers and Christian mothers were praying for you. Before you were a week old you were carried to the church and baptized, cleansed from the stain of original sin, and the grace of God which St. Paul speaks of, was abundantly given to you in Christ Jesus. You had scarcely learned to toddle from one part of the home into another before you were taught, almost unconsciously, to sign yourself with the sign of the cross. And then the power of speech came; and the sweet and adorable name of Jesus was nearly the first word which your baby lips pronounced. A Christian mother told you over and over the beautiful story of our Saviour's earthly life and death and resurrection. At her knees with clasped hands you lisped your infant prayers. Under her kind and watchful eyes you lived your childish life of sweet and holy innocence. And then came confession, and the first Communion, and confirmation, and the confessions and Communions and Masses and prayers and sermons and instructions since then:—the whisperings of God in your heart:—the good impulses from within, the good examples from without. And through all this and by all these means, from your very earliest infancy up to this present moment, God has been calling you into His vineyard.

Very surely then we are among the many who are called. If it were only one-half as certain that we will be among the few who are chosen! For that we must trust in God; but even while trusting in God, we must do our share. Because "He Who created you without your aid," as St. Augustine says, "will not save you without your aid." We must place our firm reliance upon the all-merciful Father in heaven, but at the same time we must work out our salvation in fear and trembling. If we seem to be keeping ourselves free from grievous sin, we must strain every nerve to persevere. If we have been wicked enough to fall into mortal sin, we must remember that while life lasts "it is never too late to mend," and that even at the eleventh hour the Master is willing and ready to receive us into His vineyard.

It is Septuagesima Sunday. The holy season of Lent will open just two

weeks and three days from now. Pray every day between now and then for the grace of a holy Lent,—for the grace of such a Lent as you have never lived before. Say some little extra prayer each day for this intention. It may be that even one good Lent may be for you the beginning and the foundation of a holy life and a happy death and a blissful eternity.

And if your life has not been a holy one,—if it has been far from a holy one up to this time,—don't be discouraged by that. It was for just such as you that our Divine Saviour made the parable of today's gospel. Come into the vineyard even now at the eleventh hour, and even yet you will not be too late to earn the day's wages. You know the way in: a thoughtful, earnest, sincere act of contrition before you leave the church this morning; a good confession at the earliest opportunity; and afterwards confession again and again; and Communion, not just once a year at Easter time when you have to go whether you want to or not, but many times a month, weekly, frequently, or daily, according to what is possible in the particular circumstances of your particular life. Hearken to this gospel of today, and ponder over it, and act upon it. Hearken to the good impulses of your own heart. You *know* that your heart is prompting you to do right. You hear the voice of conscience even now telling you to take the means to do right. The voice of conscience is the Voice of God. It is the kind and loving Voice of your great Father in heaven, calling you into His vineyard.

If you enter even at the eleventh hour, you are sure of the day's wages. Sometimes those who begin late in the day, outstrip those who have been toiling from early morning. A few years of fervour and warm love and burning devotion will outweigh many years of lukewarm, half-indifferent service. Sometimes "shall the last be first and the first last". It was so with St. Paul and St. Mary Magdalen and St. Augustine, and a host of other holy penitents. It may be so with you.

Only enter, while there is yet time, and work hard in the vineyard, and make the most of what is left to you of the day and of the daylight; for "soon the night cometh, when no man can work" (JOHN, IX., 4). Only too soon the twelfth hour will strike for us, and the sun will sink down below the horizon, and gloaming and darkness will fall upon our labours. And then it will only remain, for the Master to pay out the day's wages, and for us to take from His hands our eternal reward, or our eternal punishment.

May He grant us to profit by the gospel of today! May He help us to help ourselves: to struggle into the state of grace and into His friendship at any cost, with any labour, at any sacrifice; and to remain in His divine friendship through the brief years of this little life., and through the endless ages of eternity!

XVII.—BAD SOIL.

LUKE, VIII., 4-15.

(SEXAGESIMA.)

WHENEVER we fail to do our duty in this life, it is not for want of the divine assistance that we fail. When we think of all the helps which we have,—the sacraments which our Saviour has instituted to strengthen our souls, the graces He is constantly pouring into our hearts, the wonderful Sacrifice of the Mass at which we are present at least once a week, and the sermons and instructions which we have to listen to so regularly,—we wonder how it is that having all these helps, we can be anything else than good.

And yet it is not so wonderful after all; for if the grace of God is strong on the one hand, the temptations of the devil are very powerful on the other. Everywhere in this world there is a battle going on between good and evil, and nowhere is this struggle fiercer than in the hearts of men. God and His angels are there in those human hearts, fighting for the eternal possession of them. Satan is there too with his angels, striving to drag them down into the misery of hell. God pours into our hearts graces enough to save a thousand souls, but Satan opposes those graces with all the tricks and devices which he is master of. Now it is in order to warn us against these devices of the evil one, that our Divine Saviour points out to us three of our most dangerous defects in the parable of today's gospel.

Hardness of heart, weakness of will, blindness of mind,—these are the three great faults of our human nature which today's gospel treats of. Three distinct classes of lost souls owe their everlasting misery to these three great faults. Three different kinds of confirmed and impenitent sinners are drifting on, through them, to their eternal ruin. And Satan, taking advantage of these failings, is constantly striving with all his most cunning devices to injure and destroy us by means of them. When God and His angels prompt us to deeds of kindness and charity and religion, Satan is there with his evil spirits to harden our hearts still more against those loving inspirations. When the divine grace would strengthen us to resist some enticing temptation, the evil one persuades and seduces the weakness of our wills into yielding to it. And when our Divine Lord would teach us to choose wisely,—to take the happiness of our immortal souls in preference to temporal joys or favours,—Satan clouds over still more the natural blindness of our minds, until we make the foolish choice and perish.

Hardness of heart, weakness of will, and blindness of mind,—our Saviour compares these three great failings of human nature to three different kinds of bad soil, on which the heavenly seed of His doctrines and graces is wasted and thrown away.

For He Himself, like the sower of seed, like the planter in the joyful, hopeful springtime, is continually scattering upon our hearts seeds which would bloom and blossom into lasting happiness. And sometimes He finds in those hearts good, fruitful soil, generous enough to receive His inspirations, deep and firm enough to retain them, clear enough from weeds and thorns to leave them space for growing and blossoming and “bringing forth fruit in patience.” But oftentimes too the divine seed of His doctrines and graces falls into unworthy souls, barren and sterile, where there is hardness of heart, and weakness of will, and blindness of mind, and every other kind of bad, unfruitful soil.

“The sower went out to sow his seed.” Now the sower in the parable is our Divine Lord Himself, Who came down from heaven to sow our hearts with the seed of His doctrine and His grace. He is God equal to the Father from all eternity; but when the fullness of time came for the redemption of mankind, He took this world for His field, and descended into it to plant truth and holiness in the souls of men. The souls of men then are the soil in which the Divine Sower would sow His seed. And they are not always fertile soil like that in many regions of our country, where every inch of ground yields fruit a hundred-fold, but very often the sterile, mountainous soil of the country where our Lord passed His earthly life, dry and stony, and with only a few patches of fertile ground scattered through it here and there.

“And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and it was trodden down and the fowls of the air devoured it.” This first portion of the seed dropped upon the trodden paths which farm-hands had been walking over till the soil was hard as stone; and the seed could not penetrate into this hardened ground but lay there, trodden upon by passers-by and drying up on the surface, till the birds devoured it.

In explaining the parable our Saviour compares this first kind of bad soil to the hardened hearts of those men and women who hear the word of God, but have neither welcome for it nor belief in it. There are men and women of this kind, who are so taken up with things of the world that they will give no serious attention to anything else. Their minds are closed and locked against belief in the truths of God, and their hearts are hardened against His graces. If they should be touched by God’s grace now and then, or for example moved by something in the gospel of the Sunday, they would banish the impression and forget it the moment that they left the church, so that they might hurry back to their week-day occupations or amusements with their

whole heart and soul; as if there were nothing better in life than business and nothing higher or nobler than money-making. Hardness of heart, coldness and insensibility towards spiritual things, render the souls of these people barren soil. They hear the word of God, our Saviour said, but "the devil cometh," like the birds of the air in the parable, "and taketh the word out of their heart, lest believing they should be saved."

But a second portion of the seed fell in places where there was a layer of rock with only a few inches of dry clay above it; "and as soon as it was sprung up it withered away, because it had no moisture."

Now persons who are not hard of heart, but only weak of will, correspond to this second kind of bad soil. These are men and women who have hearts, and hearts too which are capable of being stirred up by the grace of God. In fact they are easily moved to acts of piety; but unfortunately they yield to temptation almost as easily. They seem to have no spinal column, no staying qualities, no perseverance; and so it happens that although they believe readily in the teachings of the Gospel, yet they soon forget them again and fall back from the practice of their religion. Our Divine Lord compares them to the stony soil where there were only a few inches of clay on the surface above the rock; and the seed which fell here sprang up quickly, but withered away almost as quickly for lack of moisture. Thus the word of God finds a place in their yielding hearts and bears some little fruit almost at once; but the fruit is short-lived. They are feeble, shallow-hearted men and women, wanting in perseverance and strength of character; and at the first strong temptation that assails them, the virtue which they had begun to cultivate, is likely to wither away and vanish. "They upon the rock," says our Saviour in explaining the parable, "are they who when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no roots; for they believe for a while, and in time of temptation they fall away."

The third portion of the seed dropped in places where thorns and thistles had already taken root; "and the thorns growing up with it, choked it."

To this third kind of bad soil corresponds the third great defect which our Lord desires to point out to us in this parable, namely, blindness of mind. On account of this blindness of mind, great and serious danger arises for many from the riches and pleasures of the world. And therefore our Divine Lord compares these riches and pleasures to the thorns, already rooted in the soil when the seed was sown there, which grow up with the seed, choking the grain and thus destroying it.

It might seem strange to some that riches and pleasures should be compared to thorns. Thorns wound us, whereas these delight us; yet instead of being likened to sweet flowers and luscious fruits, they are compared to sharp and bitter thorns. However it is our Lord Himself Who draws the comparison,

and surely He knows. He Alone knows how many souls, ransomed with His precious Blood, are torn away from Him forever in the mad race after the riches and pleasures of this world. Even we with our limited knowledge are able to see that the unbridled desire for riches and pleasures leads people into all sorts of sin, that the possession of them is to many a standing temptation, and that of all those who blindly give themselves up to the headlong pursuit of them, a multitude fail to save their souls where one succeeds. Therefore our Lord describes the third class of lost souls which he refers to in this parable, as those who have received the seed and have heard the word of God, but "going their way are choked with the cares, and riches and pleasures of this life, and yield no fruit." They may be persons who are neither hard-hearted nor weak-willed. They may have had at the beginning of their lives love for God in abundance and strength and firmness of character. On this very account they are all the more blameworthy. For they have wilfully allowed their silly minds to be dazzled and blinded by the pomps and shows of this short and fleeting life. They have calmly and deliberately made the foolish choice, preferring temporal joys to eternal happiness, and poor little earthly advantages to the promises of God. In the hearts of these men and women the seed of God's truth and holiness "fell among thorns, and the thorns growing up with it, choked it."

It was only the remainder of the seed which "fell upon good ground and being sprung up yielded fruit a hundred-fold." And this good ground our Divine Saviour likens to those men and women "who in a good and very good heart, hearing the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit in patience."

So these are three classes of lost souls with their three ruinous defects of hardness of heart, weakness of will, and blindness of mind; three kinds of bad soil upon which the seed of the Divine Sower is wasted. Let us examine ourselves and see to it that we belong in neither of the three. Let us look into our souls and make sure that Satan is not in them, impeding the workings of God's grace either by the hardness of heart which makes belief impossible, or by the weakness of will, the lack of earnestness and perseverance, which makes belief almost useless, or finally by the blindness of mind, the stupidity and lukewarmness which come from too eager following after the riches and pleasures of this world. And let us pray to God as the holy season of Lent approaches, that He will help us to improve ourselves,—that He will prevent our hearts from becoming barren soil, and will make them deep and warm to receive His grace, like the fertile ground which yields return a hundred-fold for the seed which is planted in it; so that hearing the word of God in a good and perfect heart, we may "keep it, and bring forth fruit in patience."

XVIII.—BLIND BARTIMEUS.

LUKE, XVIII., 31-43.

(QUINQUAGESIMA.)

THE blind man by the wayside prayed for light. All around him there was light in abundance. And he knew it, because he could hear the sounds of awakened life, and he could feel the heat of the sun on his uncovered head and on his bare hands and feet. It was broad day. But day and night were one to his sightless eyes. No light, no colour, no dawn, no twilight; but continual and unvaried darkness from the first to the last of the twenty-four hours. And in that darkness from which he had never escaped, which went with him wherever he went, he "sat by the wayside begging." He begged for money, because with money he would get food and clothing, and these were necessities for him, and he could not work for them nor earn them. He begged for whatever might be thrown to him; anything that any human being would give, he was willing to take. But what he would have taken most gladly of all, was the sight of his eyes. If he might have *his* wish, it would not be the wisdom of Solomon, nor the fortune of a millionaire, nor the throne of a king, but light.

Now it chanced that the Lord of light was near him on that day, and was drawing nearer every moment. It was at the very close of those thirty-three blessed years which He had spent on earth. That morning He had called together His twelve apostles and had foretold to them (for at least the third time now) His passion and death and resurrection; and with them about Him and with vast multitudes of disciples before and behind and on every side of Him He was going up to Jerusalem to His passion and death.

The blind man by the wayside knew nothing of this, although he had often heard tell of our Divine Saviour. Who had not heard of Him in that country after those three years of wonders? On the lips of rich and poor alike His name was a blessed word; and even the blind beggar had been told more or less about those thousands of others, poor and afflicted, who had been healed by the touch of His divine hand or by the words of His lips. But little hope had he that morning that Jesus of Nazareth would ever come so near to him, and little expectation that on that very day our Divine Saviour, going up to Jerusalem, would pass the spot where he was sitting.

Soon there was a sound of footsteps, and the footsteps too of a large number

of people. He could not be mistaken, because his hearing was very sharp, as the hearing of a blind man often is. Often where one sense is lacking, the other senses for that very reason will become all the more acute. And surely it was a large crowd of people that he heard approaching, perhaps a procession of some kind, at any rate hundreds of footsteps. He waited until the multitude drew near and then, raising his sad face with its blank, vacant eyes to the foremost of them, "he asked what this meant. And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by."

Then, when those words reached his ears,—when he heard that holy name,—a sudden certainty thrilled his heart like a certainty of faith, that the blessed light of heaven which he had desired and hungered for so long, was going to break forth for him at last. Jesus of Nazareth was passing by,—He Who over and over again during those last three years had raised the dead, and healed the sick, and given sight to the blind,—He Who had never refused even in one instance to grant the prayers that were humbly offered to Him,—He, the long-expected Son of David, of Whom all the prophets had prophesied just such miracles and marvels for centuries before His Birth; of Whom, for example, seven-hundred-and-ninety years before, the prophet Isaiah had said: "Behold your God!—God Himself will come and will save you! Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped: then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall be free" (Isaiah, XXV., 4-6),—Jesus of Nazareth was passing by!

The blind man by the wayside could not see Him, but he knew that He was there within hearing, almost within reach, and he lost no time in raising up his voice. He cried out as loudly as his lungs could shout, "saying: 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!'" When they rebuked him for the uproar he was making—because thy did not know or remember perhaps what an awful thing it is to be blind and to long for the light—he only "cried out much more: 'Son of David, have mercy on me!'"

And our Divine Saviour heard the blind man's cry. He heard the poor, sightless Hebrew imploring Him, as it were, by the ancient glories of his native land and by the royal David, the greatest of his nation's kings,—calling upon Him as the Son of David, the Christ, the Expected One, to have mercy on him. And Jesus, standing still where He was, commanded him to be brought unto Him.

And when willing hands had guided and helped the blind man to that spot where our Saviour stood waiting for him, "He asked him, saying: 'What wilt thou that I do to thee?' But he said: 'Lord, that I may see!' And Jesus said: 'Receive thy sight: thy faith hath made thee whole.' And immediately he saw, and followed Him, glorifying God."

What a glorious change it must have been for him, after groping in darkness so long, to have the longed-for light break upon him at last!—to see the sunshine lighting up the green grass and the grey road, to see the new palaces of Jericho rising in the clear air, to behold the green trees, and the blue sky, and the exulting multitudes around him praising God for the miracle of His recovery; and above all, that great central Figure standing there in the midst of them, the Divine One, the Son of David, the Christ, Who had so mercifully wrought in him this wondrous change! We can imagine how his heart must have almost broken with gratitude. He did not have much eloquence of tongue, either, to speak his thanks; so he simply let his actions speak for him. He fell in humbly, yet exultingly, with the crowds behind his Divine Benefactor, “and followed Him, glorifying God.”

Now in closing this brief meditation let us notice just three things in regard to the blind man of today's gospel: first, that he knew he was blind; secondly, that knowing this and realizing in what helpless darkness he was groping, he prayed to our Saviour with simple, earnest faith for light; and thirdly, that when his prayer was granted and the light was given to him, he “followed Him, glorifying God.” And let us strive to imitate the blind man in all three of these points.

For often we are blind, even as he was; not in our bodily eyes, though, but in the eyes of our hearts and minds and souls. Otherwise how could we remain for even one week in grievous sin? How could we fall back into such sin so often after having been cleansed from it in confession? And how could we fail, during all these years which we have lived, to make ourselves better than we are? And therefore, even as he knew his weakness, so let us try to know ours, and to realize that only too often, in heart and soul if not in body, we are blind, stone-blind.

And secondly when we have realized this, let us pray to our Saviour, even as the blind man prayed, for light. Let us be regular at our daily prayers, beseeching Him to do away with our blindness, to enlighten our minds and illumine our hearts; so that we may understand what sin is in all its deformity, what virtue is in all its beauty; and so that, blind no longer, we may clearly see, and always see, the shortness and trivialty of this life, the eternity of heaven, the unending horror of hell.

Thirdly and lastly, when our prayers have been granted and the needed light has been given us, let us follow Him, glorifying God. For if we ever depart from Him, the light which He has given, will depart from us. And therefore let us cling to Him always, keeping His commandments and frequenting His sacraments and practising the virtues that He loves. So that we may follow Him and glorify Him not for a month or a year simply, but for all the years of this earthly life and all the endless ages of a blissful eternity.

XIX.—THE SPIRIT OF PENANCE.

(MATT., IV., 1-11.)

(I. SUNDAY OF LENT.)

TODAY the Church reminds us of our Saviour's forty-days' fast, in order to awaken in our hearts the spirit of penance. The desire to do penance for our sins made Him come down from heaven, to be born in poverty, to live a life of privations and hardships, and to die upon the cross. "Despised and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity, . . . He hath borne our weaknesses and carried our sorrows, . . . He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins" (ISAI., LIII., 3-5). It was this same desire to do penance for our sins which led Him into the desert to fast for forty days. "He was tempted in all things like as we are, but without sin" (HEBR., IV., 15). He had no sin, but yet He did penance for sin.

We have sins, have ourselves committed sin, and hence have all the more reason for doing penance. The spirit of penance should be in our hearts not only during Lent, but at all times. Christ Himself has set us the example: the Church of Christ has followed that example in every age, even to the present day. That same spirit of penitence which led Him into the desert, moved His saints later on to fast from food and drink, from sleep, from the sinful and even from the innocent pleasures of this life. It made the confessors and martyrs rejoice and be thankful for the sufferings which their persecutors inflicted upon them. It filled up the monasteries and convents of all the centuries with men and women who had gladly turned their backs upon the joys and consolations of this world, in order to do penance for sin. That same spirit of penitence should be in our hearts not only during Lent, but at all times.

Those who suffer some great misfortune, do not readily forget it, but on the contrary it fills their souls with grief, and the grief is lasting. Now sin is the greatest of all misfortunes, and to fall into mortal sin is the most terrible calamity that can possibly happen to any Christian; therefore our sorrow for our sins and our firm purpose of never repeating them must be enduring to the very end of our lives. It may be that we have abandoned our sins and confessed them and that God has forgiven us; that does not excuse us from still doing penance. An entire life of repentance is not enough for even one mortal sin. "The days of our years are three-score-years-and-ten; and if by reason of strength they be four-score years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow" (Ps., LXXXIX.,

10). Even though we lived a hundred years, we should never forget how low we once fell, how ungratefully we offended God, how we degraded our immortal souls by our sins, and in rashness and folly exposed ourselves to the danger of losing heaven forever.

We should make our life a life of repentance. We should offer to God all our sufferings of all kinds as penance for our sins. When death tears away from us those who are very dear to our hearts, when sickness and bitter pain come upon us, when God sends us disappointments and humiliations and afflictions, when alluring temptations are most difficult to resist, when our daily work seems uncommonly hard, when the Church prescribes for us certain fastings and abstinences on certain days or at certain seasons, we should endure all these sufferings, whether great or small, not only willingly, but gladly (if possible), in penance for our sins.

Gladly (if possible) we should salute the cross of our blessed Redeemer. Our difficulties are *our* crosses. The symbol of our sufferings is the great, sweet cross of Christ.

The sign of the Cross is familiar to every Catholic. We sign ourselves with it a number of times each day. We carry it with us continually, attached to our rosary-beads. We have it before our eyes in our churches, in our homes. We often kneel before it and adore and pray, not to the image of course, but to the God-Man suffering for us, Whom the image serves to represent. "God forbid," says the Apostle, "that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by Whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world" (GAL., VI., 14). Even as we reverence and love the holy cross, so we should try to reverence and love the sufferings and penances of which the cross is the sign and the symbol,—the misfortunes, the trials, the mortifications which the adorable Will of God has placed in our way.

It is far from easy to do this. Even where the spirit is willing, the flesh very often is weak. St. Francis of Sales at a certain trying period of his life found himself overwhelmed with troubles and difficulties, so that he scarcely knew where to turn. "I see before me crosses of all kinds," he said. "My flesh trembles at them, but my heart adores them. Yes; I salute you, crosses, small and great, spiritual and temporal, interior and exterior: I salute you and I kiss your feet, unworthy as I am of even so much as the honour of your shadow." So this great saint struggled manfully against his natural weakness, until he had forced his heart and soul to embrace and love his trials and afflictions, even while his flesh trembled and grew pale and wan beneath them. And so in our feebleness we must strive, especially during Lent, to embrace and love our sufferings, to accept willingly all the afflictions of this imperfect life as penance for our sins, to practice in every way the virtue of penitence.

For penitence is a virtue in itself, as distinct from the other virtues as faith, for example, or humility. Just as faith is the virtue which makes us believe and yield the obedience of our minds to all those truths which God has revealed and which the Church believes and teaches; just as humility is the virtue which makes us "know ourselves," which gives us a true knowledge of ourselves, and thus guards us against self-conceit and pride and vanity; so penitence is the virtue that stirs us up to detest our sins, and forms in our hearts the firm resolution to give satisfaction for those sins and to avoid them in future. And even as faith and humility, like two bright lamps, should light up every corner of our lives,—faith showing us the greatness of God, while humility reveals to us the paltriness and pitiable smallness of ourselves,—so this virtue of penitence should also be in our hearts at every moment of our existence.

It is with the purpose of keeping the spirit of penance alive in our hearts all the year around and all through our lives, that we say the Act of Contrition and the Confiteor in our daily prayers, humbling ourselves before God again and again, telling Him over and over how sorry we are for the past and how resolved for the future, and begging Him day after day to "wash us yet more from our iniquities and cleanse us from our sin" (Ps. L., 4). But there are certain days and seasons which the Church has set apart for a more full and particular exercise of this virtue, and the most important of these is Lent.

There are certain times in our lives when we need one virtue or another to support us, more even than at other times. Thus when sickness or pain or poverty or misfortunes of any kind are sent to us from God, that is the time to practise resignation. When God, Whom in His unveiled glory no man can see and live (Exod., XXXIII., 20.), is on the altar at Mass under the simple species of bread and wine, that is the time for us to exercise our faith. And so also when the Church sets apart forty days out of the three-hundred-and-sixty-five, and exhorts her children to spend those forty days in grieving for their sins and giving satisfaction for them, that is the time for us to arouse in our souls the virtue of penitence. There is no time in the entire year or during our whole lives when we should not repent of our sins; but we must be especially anxious and careful to do this during Lent.

During Lent the spirit of penance which is in our hearts, comes to the surface and more than ever shows itself in outward works. During Lent we may be said to be "in mourning" for our lost innocence. We receive the ashes upon our foreheads, in order to humble ourselves with the dust of the earth, of which we are and into which we shall return. We keep ourselves more retired than usual, not frequenting public places of amusement. We guard ourselves more carefully than ever against the temptations of the evil one. We increase our daily or weekly prayers, hear Mass every day if possible, receive our Easter

Communion of duty and our weekly or frequent or daily Communion of devotion with even a stricter regularity than during the rest of the year, attend at the Lenten evening services and at the solemn ceremonies of Holy Week, and mortify our bodies and our passions by the fasting and abstinence which the Church prescribes.

These and suchlike practices make up what is called outward or exterior penance. But outward penance is of small avail unless it comes from a heart contrite and humble, from a truly penitent heart. If we have not the spirit of penance in our hearts, it will do us but little good to fast and mortify ourselves outwardly.

The Pharisees kept a strict fast at the appointed times; but their fasting was vanity and hypocrisy, because their hearts were filled with pride and self-esteem rather than with sorrow for their sins. The miser fasts and oftentimes stints himself of the food his body craves, in order to lay up hoards of wealth; but his fasting is avarice and not penance. Wherefore fasting and outward mortification are of little avail, unless they be accompanied by inward penitence and founded upon sincere and heartfelt sorrow for sin. In other words, penance of the senses is of no use unless penance of the heart be joined with it.

The spirit of penance in the soul must be the foundation of outward penance, deprived of which foundation our fasting would be sham and humbug, like that of the Pharisees. This spirit of penance begins with a true conversion to God, and consists in a sorrowful detestation of sin, above all mortal sin, and a firm resolve to avoid it in future. It is plain to all that no man or woman can love mortal sin and love God at one and the same time. If your face is to the east, your back will be towards the west; and if your face is turned towards mortal sin, your back will be turned upon God. God and mortal sin are infinitely farther apart than the east and the west, and infinitely more opposed to each other; and while a man's affections are engaged by the one, he can neither love nor be loved by the other.

A turning away from at least mortal sin is necessary, a true conversion towards God, before the sinner can get back into God's friendship, which is the state of grace. This turning away from mortal sin is the same thing as the "change of heart" which the Sacred Scriptures speak of so often. Conversion towards God is a deep and thorough change of heart: for the heart which has hitherto delighted in drunkenness, or wallowed in impurity, or thought nothing of missing the Sunday Mass and the Easter Communion, or given itself up to some dishonest or scandalous business, or loved serious and grievous detraction and calumny,—undergoes a great and wonderful change: it hates and despises those sins which it formerly delighted in, and it loves the kind God and Father of all towards Whom it used to be so cold and indifferent.

This is the spirit of penance, then, which is so necessary for passing the holy season of Lent in a manner acceptable to God. As there is an outer man (which is the body) and an inner man (which is the soul), so there is an outward fast from food and an inward fast from sin. And as we are bound at all times to take more care of our soul than of our body, so during Lent we should give more attention to the inward penance of the heart than to the outward penances of the senses. Not that we should overlook these outward penances; we ought not to neglect any of the practices that are prescribed for us or advised to us during Lent: we must obey the Church by fasting and abstaining when not dispensed or in some way excused, we should increase our prayers and attend at all the Lenten services. But the greatest part of our attention should be given to the inner man: to assuring ourselves that we have the spirit of penance in our hearts, without which outward penance would be incomplete and ineffectual; to making ourselves certain first of all, that we are in the friendship of God, and afterwards, that our hearts are full of sorrow for our past sins and of firm and fixed resolve never to repeat them.

And for a thorough change of heart and a true conversion to God there is no time like Lent. "Behold now is the acceptable time, behold now is the day of salvation" (II. COR., VI., 2). The whole Church is doing penance for sin and offering prayers and Sacrifice for sinners; the angels and saints are interceding for us with redoubled fervour; the gates of heaven are open and God is pouring down His most special graces upon all who are willing to receive them. Our Divine Saviour promised that where two or three were gathered together in His Name, there He would be in the midst of them. During this holy season it is not two or three individuals, but the entire Church of Christ, which is gathered together at the foot of God's throne, imploring pardon for sin, offering prayer and penance, tears, watchings, fasts and supplications for the sins of the whole world, crying out in the words of the prophet: "Spare, oh! Lord, spare Thy people and give not Thine inheritance to reproach!" (JOEL, II., 17).

Let not the sinner imagine that he can put off his conversion with safety, and change his heart whenever *he* is ready to do so. The sinner never knows how soon God may withdraw His graces, how soon continued and chronic mortal sin may deprive him of his faith, or how suddenly he may be called before the judgment-throne. It is an old reflection, but as true as it is trite, that this may be our last Lent. Some of us certainly will not be among the living when the congregation assembles here next year for another Lenten season, Which of us shall be in the grave when that next Lent opens? A foolish question. Ask, as well, where the lightning will strike in the next thunder-storm. When shall we die? We do not know. Where will death strike us down? We cannot

tell. Nothing is more uncertain than the time and the place, the when and the where of our death. Nothing is more certain than that sometime, somewhere death will come to us. A month from now, a week from now, tonight even, we may hear the voice of God calling us to judgment, saying: "Thou fool, this night is thy soul required of thee" (LUKE, XII., 20).

Sooner or later that Divine Voice will speak to us in justice, which is now speaking to us in mercy and love; which is inviting us, coaxing us, begging us even now at the very beginning of this holy season to change our hearts and our lives, to give up mortal sins for once and for ever, and turn to God, and do penance. Let us listen to this loving invitation, and not close our ears against it. "Today if you shall hear His Voice, harden not your hearts" (Ps., XCIV., 8.); lest at some future day God's justice should apply to you those dreadful words which He once spoke of the stubborn and impenitent Hebrews: "They tempted Me," God said, "they proved Me and saw My works. Forty years long was I offended with that generation, and I said: These always err in heart, And these men have not known My ways. So I swore in My wrath that they shall not enter into My rest" (9-11).

May that sentence never be ours,—that dreadful sentence, which would debar us from ever entering into God's sweet rest! But, on the contrary, when the labours and trials and sufferings and penances, as well as the brief happiness, of this imperfect life are all over and done with forever, may He grant unto us eternal rest, and let perpetual light shine upon us!

The rest and the happiness and the light of God,—it was for these that He created us. "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God, and our heart is restless and unquiet until it hath found repose in Thee!"—

"My feet are weary and my hands are tired,
My soul oppressed;
And I desire, what I have long desired,
Rest,—only rest!"

How beautifully these words of the saint and these other words of the poet priest express the longing of tired, weak, languishing humanity for the eternal repose which is going to pay for its short day of toil, and for the Heaven, which shall crown its earthly career of prayer and effort and self-restraint! May that repose and that Heaven be ours, when the end comes!

When life's day is drawing to its close, and the evening-shadows of death are darkening over us,—when the tired eyes are just beginning to fall asleep at last, and the feeble, wornout limbs are too weary to do any more work,—when

"Down the west
Life's sun is setting, and we see the shore
Where we shall rest,—

may that twilight fall upon all of us only after well-kept Lents and well-spent lives, after long avoidance of mortal sin, and after sincere repentance for sins of the past! So we shall win our eternal rest,—in the Bosom of God, and in the bright light of endless Heaven,—consumed with His sweetest love and clothed with His divinest glory forever and ever!

XX.—THE TRANSFIGURATION.

MATT., XVII., 1-9.

(II. SUNDAY OF LENT.)

TWO years and more after our Saviour began His public life, He told His apostles of His future sufferings and death. Those sufferings and that death were still a year away from Him; but they were always in His thoughts. Onwards "from that time," says St. Matthew, "Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the ancients and scribes and chief-priests, and be put to death, and the third day rise again" (MATT., XVI., 21).

Now the apostles were dismayed and terrified when they heard these things, and St. Peter, who was always the leader and the spokesman of the twelve, began to remonstrate with Him. But our Lord rebuked Peter very severely for still cherishing his little worldly notions about Him and His mission, even after all the miracles and instructions of those two long years. Even after those years of constant training in our Saviour's company, St. Peter seemed still to expect that our Lord was going to set up an earthly kingdom rather than a heavenly one,—a kingdom more or less like the magnificent Roman empire, which was ruling the whole world just at that very time. Of course our Saviour's miracles proved that He could do this, if He desired to; they proved that He had power, not only over sickness and disease, not only over life and death, but also over wind and wave and all the great forces of nature. Myriads of mighty angels were at His beck and call. Evidently it would be easy for Him to set up an earthly kingdom; it would be a simple matter for Him, if He so desired, to snatch the sceptre from the hands of the Caesars, and to seat Himself, in Jerusalem perhaps instead of at Rome, on the throne of an enduring world-empire.

Golden but foolish dreams like these filled the minds of the apostles about that time. They were not saints yet. They were still selfish and worldly, seeking and savouring "not the things that are of God, but the things that are of men" (MATT., XVI., 23). And now to their bitter disappointment, instead of promising them worldly wealth or worldly honours, our Divine Lord was foretelling to them humiliations and sufferings and death. "Jesus said to His disciples: 'If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.-----For what is a man advantaged, if he gain

the whole world, and lose himself, and cast away himself? For he that shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him the Son of man shall be ashamed when He shall come in His majesty' " (LUKE, IX., 23-26).

As a matter of fact, notwithstanding those two years which they had spent, in His company, those two years of astounding miracles with their daily displays of almighty and Godlike power, it was hard for them to realize always that He was God. For He was as truly man as He was truly God; and they were living with Him day after day. They saw Him eat and drink and sleep, a man like themselves; and His Divinity was hidden from them. His resurrection had not come yet, nor His ascension into heaven, nor the descent of the Holy Ghost; and even the divine majesty of His words and the almighty power of His daily miracles could only very slowly increase their faith. One other year must pass away before those stubborn fishermen would be thoroughly changed. One other year must pass before even the doubting Thomas, the most brain-proud and unbelieving of them all, would throw himself down at our Saviour's blessed feet sobbing out like a little child: "My Lord and my God!"

Meantime, having saddened them by foretelling His death, our Divine Lord felt the need of encouraging and consoling them. He must show them once more that, plain and lowly and suffering man though He was, He was just as truly all-powerful and glorious God, the Only-Begotten Son of His eternal Father, And therefore He promised them that some of those who were standing there, should not taste death until they had had a sight of His glory.

Now it was in fulfilment of this promise that six days afterwards "Jesus taketh unto Him Peter and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart."

Why He selected Peter for those solemn occasions, is easy to understand. Peter was the chief of the apostles during our Saviour's earthly life. After our Saviour's ascension he was the visible Head of the Church, just as his successors, the popes, have been ever since then. The Gospels make this so plain, that it is almost a mystery how anyone who has read them, can doubt it. Eighteen times in the New Testament is Peter's name mentioned with those of one or more of the other apostles, and in seventeen out of these eighteen passages Peter's name is first. James and John on the other hand were brothers, and had been Peter's partners as fishermen before our Divine Lord called them to leave all and follow Him. The former of these two was the first of the twelve apostles to lay down his life for Christ; for "Herod the king----killed James, the brother of John, with the sword" (ACTS, XII., 1, 2) about twelve years after our Lord's ascension. The latter of the two brothers and the third of the trio, was St. John, "the beloved disciple," the nearest of all the twelve to our Saviour's Heart.

Hence our Divine Lord seemed to trust these three apostles more even than the others. Some months before, for example, when He was going to raise to life the dead daughter of Jairus, "He suffered not any man to go in with Him, but Peter and James and John" (LUKE, VIII., 51). These three likewise He took with Him later on into the garden of Gethsemane on the sorrowful night before His passion and death. And so also on this evening of the Transfiguration "Jesus taketh unto Him Peter and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart."

What mountain it was, the evangelists do not say; but it seems quite certain that it was either Mount Tabor or Mount Hermon. They climbed the steep slope together in the warm August twilight, following our Saviour: and the three apostles, after completing their evening devotions on the cool summit, wrapped themselves up in their cloaks and lay down to sleep, while the Master was still praying. They knew that it was His custom to spend long hours of the night in prayer, and that if He required them, He would call them; and so they did not wait for Him. And as they slept there peacefully, stretched out upon the ground, under the stars, our Divine Saviour continued in His prayer,—that wonderful prayer of the Son to His Father,—that mysterious outpouring of His human Soul before the Godhead Which was no more perfect in the Father and the Holy Ghost than It was in Him, the Only-Begotten Son.

Now on this particular night as our Divine Lord prayed, a heavenly light shone about Him. The Godhead beamed out through His humanity with a blaze of supernatural radiance, until "His countenance was altered" (LUKE, IX., 29). and "His garments became shining and exceeding white" (MARK, IX., 2). The three apostles had fallen asleep in the dim light of the stars, but they were awakened by this heavenly radiance which outshone the stars; "and waking, they saw His glory, and the two men that stood with Him" (LUKE, IX., 32). "He was transfigured before them. And His face did shine as the sun: and His garments became white as snow. And behold there appeared to them Moses and Elias talking with Him" (MATT., XVII., 2, 3),—Moses, the great law-giver of the old religion,—Elias, the chief of its prophets,—talking with Him Who was the Lord and the God of both of them,—with Him Who had come down from heaven to fulfil the prophecies and to replace the old religion by the new. "Two men were talking with Him," St. Luke says. "And they were Moses and Elias, appearing in majesty. And they spoke of His death, that He should accomplish in Jerusalem" (LUKE, IX., 30, 31).

The three apostles were dazzled and confused, struck with fear and joy at the same moment. St. Peter especially was so beside himself with delight, that he scarcely knew what he was saying; and he cried out: "Lord, it is good for us to be here: if Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for Thee,

and one for Moses, and one for Elias." The word "tabernacle," which has such a sacred meaning for us, meant with the Jews any little dwelling or shelter, such as a bower of green boughs or a tent, Now there were green boughs in abundance on the slopes below them; and it may be that St. Peter, in his ravishment at this little glimpse of heavenly glory, wished to make it lasting and to build permanent dwellings for them there on the mountain-top. He forgot that there is no permanence in earthly joys. There is no heaven on earth, nor any lasting delight; and even while he was yet speaking, "behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them" and veiled them from his sight. It symbolized the presence of the Almighty Father.

Fifteen-hundred years before, God had revealed the Law and the ten Commandments to that very Moses on Mount Sinai amid the terrors of thunder and lightning in the blackness of a dark cloud (EXOD., XIX., 16.). But now it was a bright cloud that descended from the still sky and overshadowed the glorified forms of our Divine Lord and of Moses and Elias. "And lo, a Voice out of the cloud, saying: 'This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him!'"

It was the very Voice which had spoken over our Saviour two years earlier at His baptism, and it uttered the very words which it had uttered then: two years earlier, when Jesus came "from Galilee to the Jordan, unto John, to be baptized by him. But John stayed Him, saying: 'I ought to be baptized by Thee, and comest Thou to me?' and Jesus answering, said to him: 'Suffer it to be so now. For so it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.' Then he suffered Him. And Jesus, being baptized, forthwith came out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened to Him: and He saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon him. And behold, a Voice from heaven, saying: 'This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased' " (Matt., III., 13-17.)

Even as the Almighty Father had borne witness thus to His Only-Begotten Son at the very opening of His three-years' mission, so He repeated the miraculous testimony, now that two-thirds of that mission was accomplished. And the three favoured apostles, seeing the bright cloud as it came down upon their Master and hearing the divine Voice, fell upon their faces trembling in the presence of God, "and were very much afraid." It was only for a moment. For almost immediately He came to them, and gently touched them, and said: "'Arise and fear not.' And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one but only Jesus."

The heavenly light had vanished from His face and from His raiment. Once more He gazed upon them with the loving human features which they knew so well. Once more He was clothed in the plain and simple garments of the poor, such as they wore themselves. The Lawgiver and the Prophet were

no longer by His side. And in the clear night-air of the mountain and under the August stars the Master and His three disciples were alone.

It was in the early morning that they returned to the other apostles; "and as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying: 'Tell the vision to no man till the Son of man be risen from the dead.' " Of course they did His bidding. Their lips were locked upon the glory they had seen, until after His resurrection from the dead; but they could never forget it. Even months afterwards, when the same favoured three were with Him on Holy Thursday evening in the garden of olives,—if they saw Him prostrated in human wretchedness and sweating blood from every pore in His intense agony,—they would remember the glory of that night; and would know well throughout all the humiliations of His holy passion that notwithstanding His misery and *apparent* weakness, this despised, insulted, suffering Man was God,—the beloved and the Only-Begotten Son of the Almighty Father.

And they would remember it to be the very end of their lives. Thirty-eight years later, St. Peter was an old man at Rome, feeble and worn-out with the cares of the Church. For thirty-seven years he had been pope; for twenty-five years he had been bishop of Rome; and now in his own episcopal city he was a condemned criminal, sentenced to be crucified. His crime was his religion; he would not sacrifice to the gods of Rome, and by refusing to do so he disobeyed and defied the emperor's decrees. When he heard his death-sentence, he made one last request. It was this: that since he must be crucified, he might be granted the favour of being crucified head-downwards; for in his sincere and deep humility he did not dare to have his death resemble too exactly the death of his Divine Master; and the request was granted. Shortly before his humble and holy death St. Peter wrote his "second epistle," addressing it "to them that have obtained equal faith with us in the justice of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II. PET., I., 1.). And in this last epistle, being assured now that his death was close at hand, he recalled once more that glorious night upon the mountain. You have this second epistle of the first pope in your New Testament. If you will turn over sometime towards the close of its first chapter, you will find these words: "For we have not by following artificial fables made known to you the power and presence of our Lord Jesus Christ," St. Peter wrote, "but we were eye-witnesses of His greatness. For He received from God the Father honour and glory, this Voice coming down to Him-----: 'This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him!' And this Voice we heard brought from heaven," St. Peter continues, "when we were with Him in the holy mount" (II. PET., I., 16-18).

The beautiful gospel of the Transfiguration is placed before us by the Church on the second Sunday of Lent. Evidently she wishes us even in times of re-

pentance and sorrow to remember our future happiness; even in seasons of self-affliction and self-humiliation to be mindful of the everlasting honour and glory which are waiting for us. And hence it is that during Lent itself, when the Stations of the Way of the Cross is such a favorite devotion with so many people, when the human degradation and the human frailty of our Divine Lord are continually before our minds, and the sufferings which He underwent for us and the death which He bore for us are constantly uppermost in our thoughts, the Church places before our eyes the bright scene of that August night:—the mountain-top ablaze with heavenly radiance, the three apostles thrilled at the same moment with terror and with joy, the venerable representatives of the old dispensation bowing down in worship before the Founder of the new, the Voice from heaven proclaiming His divinity;—and our Divine Lord Himself, His face brilliant as the sun, His garments white as snow, His Godhead beaming out through every inch of His humanity, shining with the splendour of eternal light in the glory of His transfiguration.

And therefore today in obedience to the spirit of the Church, having reverently gazed upon this scene for one brief moment, let us return back—from the mountain of glory to the valley of tears,—back into the mortifications and pious exercises and penances of Lent,—sorrow for the past, watchfulness and prayer in the present, firm and fixed resolve for the future,—yes, whenever it is the Will of God, back into sickness, pain, bereavement, lonesomeness,, poverty, disappointments humiliations, afflictions,—whatever *He* will, for His dear sake Who died for us! So that after having tried to love Him a little in this life, we may truly love Him in the life to come; where our happy hearts, bursting with eternal rapture, shall *feel* forever and ever what St. Peter strove to express in words: “Lord, it is good for us to be here!”

XXI.—HEAVEN.

MATT., XVII., 1-10.

(II. SUNDAY OF LENT.)

ONE day our Saviour promised His disciples that some of those who were standing there should not taste death until they had had a sight of His glory. In fulfilment of this promise He took Peter and James and John six days afterwards and brought them up into a high mountain, and was transfigured before them so that His face shone like the sun and His garments like the dazzling whiteness of the snow. And the three apostles were ravished with this little glimpse of heaven which our Saviour thus gave them. St. Peter in particular was so beside himself with joy that he scarcely knew what he was saying; and he cried out: "Lord, it is good for us to be here!"

In like manner the souls of the blessed in heaven,—those happy ones who have struggled bravely through the temptations of this life and have won the everlasting crown,—in like manner they may cry out to their Lord and God: "Lord, it is good for us to be here!" For in heaven will be the crown and perfection of all happiness. Those who have reached that joyful abode, are filled with such delights as only God Himself can pour upon His faithful servants.

It is in our power to think of heaven and to wonder about it; but it is beyond the powers of man to give a worthy description of it. For an insect to describe some beautiful painting would be as easy, as for a mere man to draw a picture of heaven. And the reason is, that the joys of heaven are far above our mortal comprehension. No one in this world is able to understand those boundless blessings which God has prepared for the happy souls. "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard nor hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him" (I. COR., II., 9.).

These are words of Holy Writ; and they tell us what joys God has waiting for us in heaven: namely, such joys as the eye of man has never seen nor the ear of man ever heard nor the heart of man ever conceived or imagined. It will be like an ocean of joy, overflowing, charming, entrancing every faculty of the soul and every sense of the body. Let us spend just a few moments today in thinking of this.

Consider how much pleasure we may receive even in this imperfect life through the mere senses of the body. What a world of happiness comes to us from the sense of sight alone! What a delight it is to look upon a beautiful paint-

ing, a strong piece of sculpture, a massive and well-proportioned church or public building. How charming it would be to behold a stately city such as St. John describes in the Apocalypse, its walls formed out of sapphire and emerald and amethyst, every gate a huge pearl, its streets paved with "pure gold like to clear glass" (APOC., XXI., 18). Yet this is no literal description of heaven; this is only a hint, only the faintest image of what heaven will be. Again, what delight we receive from gazing upon the beauties of nature, the landscape with its varying charms in winter, spring, summer, autumn,—in storm and sunshine,—the sky on a starry night, the meadows in springtime, the rivers and lakes, the mountains, the ocean. Now ask yourself: if all the vast, varied beauty of nature, if all the famous scenery of the entire world,—the Alps and the Apennines, the river Rhine, the Killarney lakes, the falls of Niagara,—could be gathered together into one magnificent park or reserve,—what would it all be, compared with heaven?

And as with the sight, so with the sense of hearing. No earthly pleasure is more exquisite than the pleasures of music. Nothing among earthly delights will more quickly make one think of heaven and wonder what heaven must be than to hear some sublime symphony, where the notes from so many different instruments unite into their various chords and rise and fall, grow loud or soften, in obedience to the one directing mind. How enraptured, how thrilled people are while listening to some great opera or oratorio, with the voices soaring singly in their separate parts or blending grandly together into one splendid harmony. If earthly music can be so sweet, what must the music of heaven be! Only picture for a moment, what must the music of heaven be, where the mighty angels, so far above us in every intellectual gift, are hymning the praises of God!

Thus if we gain heaven, and there is no valid reason why we should not, not only our souls, but each sense of our bodies shall be filled with unutterable blessedness. God Himself will be our exceeding great reward. God will pour His Divine sweetness into every part of our being,—into will and memory and understanding,—into sight and hearing and smell and taste and feeling. And we will have cause, and ample cause, to speak those words which St. Peter spoke on the mountain of the Transfiguration: "Lord, it is good for us to be here!"

But the chief, best joy of heaven is yet unmentioned. It is not a joy of the bodily senses, so much as a joy of the soul. It is what theologians call the Beatific Vision, the vision which makes blessed, the vision of the Holy Trinity in which we shall be allowed to see and know and love God "face to face." "All that we expect," said St. Augustine, "is contained in that one word, 'God' "; and he asserts that if God were to show His face to the lost souls, "hell itself would be instantly changed into a paradise of delights."

The soul after all, and not the body, is the proper seat of enjoyment. The joys of the soul surpass all other joys. Even in this life oftentimes we are able to understand this. Ordinary sinners while grieving for their sins have sometimes felt such consolation as exceeded all earthly pleasures. And for intense peace and lasting contentment, what worldly happiness can be compared with the holy confidence and joy which the Christian experiences even on this earth, when, having a clear conscience, he trusts that he is doing his duty and feels that he is in the friendship and love of God. Yet in this life we only know God by faith, whereas in heaven we shall behold Him in the glory of His essence, as He really is. "We see now through a glass in a dark manner," says St. Paul, "but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know even as I am known" (I. COR., XIII., 12.).

Now think a moment, if God is able to impart such consolations to those who love Him, even in this life where we only know Him by faith, what intense and overwhelming joys shall fill our souls in that future life, where the veil shall be withdrawn from before His Divine presence, and where we shall behold Him in all the glory of His majesty!

Among so many great delights this will surely be the greatest. Among so many wonderful pleasures this shall be the most wonderful. It will be the crowning joy of heaven to see and know and love God. "God's servants shall serve Him," the Sacred Scriptures tell us; "and they shall see His Face; and His Name shall be on their foreheads. And night shall be no more: and they shall not need the light of the lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall enlighten them: and they shall reign forever. And he said to me: 'These words are most faithful and true'" (APOC., XXII., 3-6). "And they shall be His people and God Himself-----shall be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and death shall be no more, nor mourning nor crying nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away. And He That sat on the throne said: 'Behold, I make all things new'. And he said to me: 'Write, for these words are most faithful and true'" (APOC., XXI., 3-5).

In heaven then we shall enjoy God Himself, and with God all things else. Not the faintest shadow shall mar the sunshine of our perfect happiness. Not a hint of sorrow or sadness shall enter into those realms of everlasting joy. Our souls shall be enraptured with the Beatific Vision. Our bodies shall be filled with their proper blessedness. And we shall be assured beyond a doubt that all this happiness is *ours*, that it is ours for all eternity, that we can never lose it, and that this is to be our blessed destiny forever and ever as long as God is God. We shall have "come to Mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, and to the company of many thousands of angels, and to the church of the first-born who are written in the heavens, and to God the judge of all, and to

the spirits of the just made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new testament" (HEBR., XII., 22-24). And we shall bask in the light of God, and be consumed with his sweetest love, and clothed with His divinest glory, forever and ever.

Heaven is so supreme a treasure, that our Saviour died upon the cross to purchase it for us. Let us then during what is left of our lives labour to gain heaven. Let us strive to bear all afflictions, to overcome all temptations, to keep all commandments of God and His Church, and to perform even the most difficult duties, in the hope of gaining Paradise. St. Mary of Egypt had lived alone in the desert for forty-seven years. When she was dying, someone asked her how she had been able to spend all those dreary years in the wilderness alone. She answered: "With the hope of Paradise."

And in our feebler way we also will try to be strong and faithful, with this glorious hope of Paradise to spur us on. "Have courage," said a great saint. "Love God, and labour for heaven!" There those dear departed ones, those gentle parents and fond relatives and faithful friends who have gone before you in the way of peace, are waiting to receive you. "There the saints await you," said St. Liguori, "Mary awaits you, Jesus Christ awaits you; He holds in His Hand an immortal crown; He will make each one of you a king in that eternal kingdom!"

XXII.—THE EVIL ANGELS.

LUKE, XI., 14-28.

(III. SUNDAY OF LENT.)

IN today's gospel it is narrated that our Divine Lord was casting out a devil from a person who was dumb, and when He had cast out the devil, the dumb man spoke. This recalls to our minds those beings, to whom some of us seldom give a thought, and yet who play such an important part in our lives, the angels. There are good angels and bad angels. In the beginning they were all good. God created them all, in millions and millions so that they could scarcely be counted, in a nature superior to our human nature, and in perfect happiness.

But all of the angels did not remain good and happy. Lucifer fell into the sin of pride, wishing to make himself equal to the Most High, and a multitude of bright spirits followed him in his sin and in his fall; and by the almighty power hell was created for their dwelling-place and they were hurled into it. Hell is therefore the home of the bad angels. But although this be their dwelling-place forever, yet they are allowed also to come upon earth in order to tempt mankind.

They have many reasons for wishing to injure us. In the first place, they are filled with jealousy and with bitter envy towards us. They see and know too well that if we obey God's laws in this life, we will have the privilege for eternity of filling those happy places in heaven which they have lost by their sin; and the thought of this makes them hate us and wish to destroy us.

In the second place, they are very proud. They fell from heaven through the sin of pride, and they are proud still. So when they see God pouring His graces into our hearts, sending His angels down from heaven to help us in our struggle for the right, and striving by every means to enforce His sweet empire over us, their pride and presumption prompt them to imitate Him: *they* will come upon earth too; *they* will help us in their own way, ministering to our pleasures and our happiness; they will bring us under their empire, if we yield to them, the empire of everlasting torment and misery whose seat and throne is in the hell of the damned.

There is a third reason why the evil angels wish to ruin us. They hate God above all things and desire, is so far as He allows them, to manifest their hatred. Now we are the work of God's hands, made according to His image,

created through His love and for His love. And there is no sweeter pleasure for these hating spirits than to strike at the Creator through His creatures and to show their hatred for God by destroying His beloved children. For all these reasons then the bad angels are bent upon our destruction and take every means they can to do us harm.

Now the first way in which they might harm us, if God permitted them, is by doing us a real bodily injury. They did this in the case of holy Job. This pious servant of God was rich and prosperous and was blessed with a number of children; but in order to prove his patience, God permitted Satan not only to destroy all his property, but to cause the death of his sons and daughters and finally to cover his own body with ulcerous sores. The patience of Job only shone out brighter at every new affliction which fell upon him. We have all heard the noble answer which he gave when he was tempted to curse God for his misfortunes. He "fell down upon the ground and worshipped Him, and said: 'Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither; the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; as it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done; blessed be the Name of the Lord'" (JOB., I., 20, 21); and so the devil was baffled.

Another way in which the evil angels have sometimes injured mankind, is by taking possession. This was the misfortune of the poor man mentioned in the gospel of today. He was possessed of a devil, and our Lord cast the devil out. This possession by an evil spirit was an awful affliction, which we can form very little idea of. The devil entered into the person who had been placed in his power, taking up his abode in the human body and dwelling there for months or even years, sometimes giving to his victim more than human strength, at other times laying him prostrate in a dead faint or in convulsions, disturbing his senses, his limbs and his organs. At the time of Christ and before His coming possession by an evil spirit seems to have been very common,—so common that it was scarcely the subject of remark. But since Christianity began to spread over the earth, it has been much less frequent; so that at the present day it is only quite seldom that we meet with a case of it.

The evil spirits however have still another method of injuring us, which they use as commonly now as they have ever done from the beginning, and this is by ordinary temptation. All our temptations do not come from the devil; a great many of them come from ourselves, from our own corrupt nature and the deceitful attractions of the world around us. Yet it is certain that a very large part of our temptations are caused by the evil spirits. In the Holy Scriptures, where there can be no deception and no error, Satan is called again and again "the tempter" (MATT., IV., 3.), "he that tempteth" (I. THESS., III., 5.), "he who seduceth the whole world" (APOC., XII., 9.), "the murderer (of

souls) from the beginning" (John, VIII., 44), and a host of other names which leave no doubt as to what his occupation is among us. St. Augustine says that "the evil one strains every nerve, directing his poisoned arrows against us that he may kill our souls" And St. Peter, the great Prince of the Apostles, exhorts his children in Christ to "be sober and watch: because your adversary the devil as a roaring lion goeth about seeking whom he may devour. Whom do you resist, strong in faith" (I. PET., V., 8, 9).

Now it is just as certain that the evil spirits can do nothing except what God permits, and that God will never permit them to tempt us beyond our powers. If even the sparrow's fall is marked by His Divine Providence, surely nothing can happen to His human beings without His knowledge. And "God is faithful," says St. Paul, "Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able; but will also make issue with temptation, that you may be able to bear it" (I. COR., X., 13.).

It is a great consolation to know that the evil angels, with all their power, cannot force us one inch from the path of virtue. If they gain a victory over us, it is because we yield to their temptations of our own free-will, never because we are compelled. It is a consolation also for us to understand that God is looking down upon us when we struggle against temptation, as a fond mother watches her child. He is willing that we should be tempted, for He Alone knows how good temptation is for us. Every foul suggestion which we banish, every evil desire which we conquer, redounds to His glory. Each time that we reject His graces and fall into sin, it is a victory for Satan.

We are never alone in the fight. Our guardian angel is with us strengthening and sustaining us. God is with us, inspiring us by His graces, comforting us with the sacraments, spurring us on by the example of His Own bitter struggle during the life which He led upon earth. And as His stern justice will punish us if we allow ourselves to be vanquished, so He will crown us with eternal happiness and glory if we persevere manfully until we have gained the victory.

XXIII.—THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

JOHN, VI., 1-15.

(IV. SUNDAY OF LENT.)

OUR Divine Lord worked this miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fed vast multitudes of people with very little bread on at least two different occasions. The gospel of this fourth Sunday of Lent describes one of those occasions, while the gospel of the sixth Sunday after Pentecost describes the other. St. Matthew and St. Mark both give us accounts of the evening when our Lord fed four-thousand men from seven loaves and a few little fishes; and all four evangelists describe that other occasion, of which you have just now heard St. John's account in the gospel, when with five loaves and two fishes He fed five-thousand men.

Now these two grand miracles were both figures of a grander miracle still which He was going to perform later on, namely, the institution of the Holy Eucharist. To change a few loaves into bread enough for vast multitudes of people, was certainly wonderful; but to change bread into His Body, was more wonderful. So the multiplication of the loaves was a type and a weak figure of the institution of the Blessed Sacrament. It must have had this meaning in the mind of our Saviour Himself at the time. At any rate it was only a short while afterwards that He promised to institute the Holy Communion and to give us His Body to eat and His Blood to drink. In fact that same sixth chapter of the Gospel according to St. John, from which I have just now been reading to you, contains this promise.

Three of the evangelists narrate how the promise was fulfilled. St. Paul also tells about it in his first epistle to the Corinthians. "I have received of the Lord," he writes, "that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread, and giving thanks, broke, and said: 'Take ye and eat: this is My Body, Which shall be delivered for you: this do for the commemoration of Me.' In like manner also the chalice, after He had supped, saying: 'This chalice is the new testament in My Blood: this do ye.....for the commemoration of Me'" (I. COR., XI., 23-25).

And that was the institution of the Blessed Sacrament. That was the first beginning of Holy Communion. Nineteen-hundred years ago, or to be as precise as possible, about eighteen-hundred-and-eighty years ago, in the city of Jerusalem in "a large dining-room furnished" (MARK, XIV., 15), on a Thursday

evening, our Saviour and His twelve apostles sat at table. It was their last supper together. It was the night before He suffered and died. And "Jesus, knowing that His hour was come that He should pass out of this world to the Father, having loved His Own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (JOHN, XIII., 1,2).

How He loved us, let the miseries and degradations of His passion, the shame and agony of His death, inform us. The older we grow and the oftener we read or hear the accounts of that passion,—the more we study into the details of the inhuman torture and the heartless insults and the savage execution inflicted upon Him,—the more we must wonder at His infinite love for us which prompted Him to undergo them. For whatever He suffered, was suffered of His Own choice and of His Own free-will; and whatever He did, was freely done for us. He was not acting merely for the little Judea or the little Galilee of that day. He was not merely acting even for the whole world of that day. But He spoke and wrought, He lived and died, for the whole world, not only of that day, but of all future times. Hence the men and women whom He met and lived among, represented to Him not only themselves, but us as well; and all that He did and said for the disciples and the holy women and the poor and despised of those times, He did and said likewise for us.

How His sacred Heart overflowed with its burning love for us on that last night of His mortal life! When He left the dining-room and repaired to the garden of olives, why did He say to Peter and James and John: "My Soul is sorrowful even unto death"? (MATT., XXVI., 38). Was it for Himself that He was so sorrowful? No; it was for us. He is God, and He saw the future as clearly as the present. He saw the millions of men and women of all times, whom He could not save, because they would not let Him. He saw the millions who, despite His sufferings and His self-sacrificing love for them, would persist in living their life of mortal sin in this world and their eternity of torment in the next. No wonder that in the garden He fell upon His knees and then upon His face in agony, till "His sweat became as drops of blood, trickling down upon the ground" (LUKE, XXII., 44).

And so in the supper-chamber just before that agony. The apostles were there with Him; but in one sense we were there too, for we were surely present in His thoughts. And what a tender, humble love He showed for us! He stood up from the table and took a towel and girded Himself. "After that He putteth water into a basin, and began to wash the feet of the disciples, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded. He cometh therefore to Simon Peter. And Peter saith to Him: 'Lord, dost Thou wash my feet!' Jesus answered, and said to him: 'What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.' Peter saith to Him: 'Thou shalt never wash my feet.'

Jesus answered him: 'If I wash thee not, thou shalt have no part with Me.' Simon Peter saith to Him: 'Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands and my head!' " (JOHN, XIII., 5-9). "Know you what I have done to you?" He said a moment afterwards. "You call Me Master and Lord; and you say well, for so I am. If then I, being your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.-----The servant is not greater than his Lord; neither is the apostle greater than He That sent him.-----Little children," He said again, "yet a little while I am with you.-----A new commandment I give unto you: that you love one another. As I have loved you, that you also love one another" (JOHN, XIII., 12-34).

"As He has loved us"! O the immense meaning of those words! Why, if we should live one-hundred years and during all those years should study and meditate ten hours each day on His life and death, we would not know even then how He has loved us. Never on this earth shall we fathom the depths of His love for us. And even in heaven, where we shall feel that love most plainly, we will not fully understand the mystery of it; for it is the boundless, infinite love of an Infinite Being.

He would not wait to be united with us in heaven. Even on this earth He would unite Himself with us, in the holy Communion, as often as we will let Him. He Who for us freely chose to be "despised and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity" (ISAIAH, LIII., 3),—to bear our weaknesses and carry our sorrows, to be wounded for our iniquities, to be bruised for our sins,—He Who being almighty God from all eternity, the Only-Begotten Son, did not shrink from becoming a little man through love for us,—He will stoop lower still. Where human eyes saw only a new-born babe in Mary's arms and at her breast, the angels saw a Divine Person, human in nature now forevermore as well as divine; for at Bethlehem He veiled His Godhead in human nature. But here He will lower Himself still farther: in the Jerusalem supper-chamber, and afterwards on the altars of His Church to the end of time, He will hide His Body, Blood, Soul and Godhead under the still meaner appearances of bread and wine. Low enough is the human nature which infinite love has made Him take upon Himself; but lower still than human nature are the species which veil His Real Presence in Holy Communion.

And so on that last evening of His mortal life, to give us the greatest proof of His love which He had ever given us, He takes the bread into His hands and the chalice of wine, and He speaks the wonderful words. Then for the first time the tremendous miracle was worked, for the first time the most marvelous of the sacraments was celebrated and administered. "This is My Body," He said, and the bread, without the slightest alteration in its outside

appearance, whether of colour, taste, shape or feeling, was transubstantiated into His sacred Body. "This is the chalice of My Blood," and the wine in the cup was silently changed into His precious Blood.

For He Who spoke those potent words, was God. It was the Voice that away back in the beginning of things had said "'Be light made,' and light was made" (GEN., I., 3). It was the Voice that had commanded "'Let the earth bring forth the living creature,'---- and it was so done" (GEN., I., 24). It was the Voice of the Man-God that spoke those words "This is My Body," and it was the almighty power of the God-Man that wrought the stupendous, quiet miracle.

The most astounding event that had ever occurred in this world was that institution of the Blessed Sacrament. The most wonderful of all wonderful things on earth is that change, that transubstantiation, which takes place upon the altar in every church and chapel at every Mass.

For Christ wrought this wondrous work for the Church of all times. What He did Himself that evening, He told His apostles likewise to do, and in speaking to the apostles He was speaking also to their successors, the bishops and priests whom He would place over His Church to the consummation of the world. "Take ye and eat, this is My Body.-----Do this for the commemoration of Me." Certainly when He told us to do this, He also gave us the power to do it. And this marvelous power has been handed on from one to another, through an unbroken line of ordinations, from the time when St. Paul ordained St. Timothy, and St. John St. Polycarp, down to these later times when our bishops ordained us, priests of this present day.

So from the very beginning until now, and from now to the end of the world, the wonderful daily miracle is worked upon our altars. In the vast cathedral of mighty cities, in the little chapel of country villages, each morning brings the God-Man down once more from heaven to be united with His beloved men and women. Even when the most solemn part of the Mass is over, He is still present in the tabernacle, where it is our Catholic custom to preserve the consecrated particles day and night. Jesus is ever as truly in a Catholic church as He was truly on the cross on Calvary or in the manger in Bethlehem; He is ever there in the tabernacle watching and waiting and longing for our love; while outside the church the throngs of men and women for whom He died, pass by as carelessly as they would pass a barn where people keep horses or cattle. They neither enter the church to pay Him a short visit of adoration and gratitude, nor are present for His Benediction at the Sunday Vespers or at evening services, nor attend at the Mass to welcome Him from heaven, nor receive Him in Holy Communion. Millions in savage lands are entirely ignorant of Him; millions in partly civilized countries like our own, disbelieve in or ignore Him.

Poor little men and women! Poor male and female insects,—hunting for their little pleasures, fighting out their little quarrels, scraping together their little fortunes,—living their little insect-lives of sixty or seventy paltry years, as though that were all,—forgetting, or trying to forget, the unending eternity which they must live, willingly or in spite of themselves, in heaven or in hell,—forgetting or ignoring the great God of that eternity, Who loved them “unto death, even unto the death of the cross,” Who loved them so well and so truly that He would not wait for them to reach heaven, but must daily Himself come down to earth to be united with them. O the stupid and contemptible, the ridiculous yet heart-breaking folly of man! “O the depth of the riches” of the mercy and love of God!

O may *we* at least love Him, and remember Him always in the sacrament of His love. May our faith in His Real Presence grow ever stronger as the years pass on, and our realization of it more vivid. May the church, where He dwells, be for us the Centre of earth and the Gate of heaven; its Altar His daily resting-place; its tabernacle the prison of His love. “There will I command the children of Israel,” He said, “and the altar shall be sanctified by My glory. ----And I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel, and will be their God” (Exod., XXIX., 43, 45).

So He dwells in our midst, in this wondrous sacrament of the altar. “Blessed be God! Blessed be His holy Name!” He dwells among us, not simply in divinity as God is present everywhere, but in human nature as well as divine, in Body and Blood and Human Soul as well as in Godhead,—even as He trod the hills and sailed the waters of Galilee, even as He slept a weary Child in the arms of holy Mary, even as He hung upon the cross a tortured, crucified Man, even as He rose from the dead, and ascended, and sits in heaven now forevermore “at the right hand of God the Father Almighty from whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead!”

O may He grant us, even as we must be judged by Him after death, so to cherish Him during life: to frequently visit Him in the tabernacle, to gladly welcome Him at the Mass, to daily receive Him under the appearance of bread upon our tongue, and reverently take Him into our bosom, and adore and talk and pray to Him and love Him with all our heart for at least those five or ten sweet minutes during which He remains really present in us after Communion. Whatever the rest of the world may do, may *we* at least never be cold or thankless for this unspeakable Gift which He gave us on the night before He died. May we never follow the stupid and devil-blinded millions who forget and ignore Him. But may we rather be among the enlightened few, who serve Him on this earth for a time, and rejoice with Him in heaven for eternity.

XXIV.—MORTAL SIN.

(LENT.)

“**O** Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, patient and of much compassion, and true, Who keepest mercy unto thousands, Who takest away iniquity and wickedness and sin!” (Words first spoken by Moses, the leader of the Chosen People, and recorded in the sacred book of Exodus, 34th chapter, 6th and 7th verses.)

The Chosen People had sinned grievously against God. They had made a golden calf and adored it and offered sacrifices to it and given it all the honour and worship which belong to the true and only God. And Moses, their great Leader, when he saw that they were sorry for their sin, went up upon the mountain to intercede with God for them, to obtain their pardon from God if that should be in any way possible. He began by reminding himself of God's great and wonderful mercy; he began by addressing “the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, patient and of much compassion, and true, Who keeps mercy unto thousands, Who takes away iniquity and wickedness and sin.”

Now I am going to speak to you tonight on mortal sin,—on that worst of all iniquities, which “brought death into the world and all our woe,” which hurled the evil angels from heaven into hell, which made the division in God's fair kingdom and where all were angels transformed some into demons and where all were intended to be “men” changed some into brutes and worse than brutes. I am going to speak to you of mortal sin, which brought our Saviour down from heaven to suffer for ungrateful men and to die upon the cross in torture and agony. And I do not know any better way to begin than by reminding you of God's great and wonderful mercy: so that those who have never committed mortal sin in the past, may trust in God to keep them from it also in the future; and that those who were formerly guilty of mortal sins, which they have now confessed and abandoned forever, may confide in the mercy of God for the grace of persevering in virtue and never falling back into their past iniquities; and that those who are in mortal sin at present, who at this moment have mortal sins upon their souls which they could count perhaps by tens and scores,—that even those foul, degraded, blackened souls may look up with hope and longing to Him Who died for them, may turn in sorrow and in earnest desire to “the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, patient and of much compassion, and true, Who keeps mercy unto thousands, Who takes away iniquity and wickedness and sin.”

We were created for happiness. God made us to love Him and serve Him in this life, to be happy with Him forever in the next life; and mortal sin is the only thing in all this world which can keep us from that happiness for which we were created.

Surely then every little fault which we fall into, cannot be a mortal sin. To speak an uncharitable word, to tell a little jocose lie, to be disobedient to our superiors in some small matter,—these are sins; they displease God, slightly at least, and we should not be guilty of them; but will little sins like these keep us out of heaven forever, or are they mortal sins? No; a mortal sin is a *grievous* offense against the law of God. All offences against God's law are sins, but all are not mortal sins. Some sins are bigger than others, just as some offences against our friends are greater than other offences. Twenty times a day you may displease your friend in little things, and he is still your friend; but offend him in some serious matter, and perhaps he will be your friend no longer. And so it is with God. Little sins displease Him without making us entirely unworthy of His friendship: whereas great sins destroy all friendship between God and the guilty soul.

Now the friendship of God is the life of our souls; and therefore those great sins which destroy God's friendship for us, are called *mortal* sins, because the word "mortal" has the same meaning as the word "deadly." The blow of the murderer is a mortal blow, and the wound which must result in death, is a mortal wound. A mortal illness is an illness which will only end when it shall have brought death to the body, and a mortal sin is a sin which brings death to the soul.

The soul thus blighted by mortal sin, still *exists*, although it has ceased to *live*. Much as the body still exists after death, a loathsome object, to be taken away from the dwellings of men and buried out of sight, so the soul still exists which has suffered the death of mortal sin,—a dead soul, foul and abominable in the eyes of God and His angels, unfit for heaven, unfit for earth or purgatory, fit only for the fire of hell.

We know what this place or state of punishment is, having been instructed about it from our childhood. We have some idea, although an imperfect one, of the torture, the misery, the darkness and despair which reign forever and ever in that region of horrors. Mortal sin is the only thing in all this world, which can ever plunge your soul into hell. Hell itself is nothing more nor less than a place or state of punishment for mortal sin. The angels rebelled against God. God's justice demanded that they should be punished for their rebellion; and hell was their dwelling-place and they were hurled into it. There those evil spirits are eternally tormented. There innumerable lost souls have since joined their company. And there, sooner or later, everyone shall arrive who shall die with mortal sin unforgiven on his soul.

These considerations fully prove to us that mortal sin is the greatest of all evils. No other evil can come between us and that happiness for which God created us: neither ignorance nor imperfections nor even venial sins can keep us permanently out of heaven; it is only mortal sin which can do this. No other calamity which might befall us, could so offend God as to destroy His friendship for us; but mortal sin in one moment can sweep away the friendship and the grace of God from our hearts. Nothing else can inflict death upon our souls: other men may have the power to kill our bodies, but we ourselves alone can kill our souls, by committing mortal sin. No other action of ours, no other misfortune which might happen to us, neither sickness nor suffering nor death, could so blacken and degrade our souls as to reduce them to the state and condition of the fallen angels. Whence it is easy to conclude that of all evils upon this earth mortal sin is the greatest.

Now let me ask in closing this first half of my instruction, how is it that so many Catholics, who believe in the full enormity of this greatest of all evils, nevertheless commit mortal sin again and again? It is not for want of knowledge. Every Catholic knows well that it is a mortal sin for example to omit the yearly Easter Communion, or to miss Mass on any Sunday without a sufficient reason; and yet how many there are who will be guilty of these omissions! Every Catholic is conscious that the abominable sins of impurity and of complete drunkenness are mortal sins; yet such sins are committed daily by men and by women who call themselves Catholics. And so with all the other mortal sins which men or women are wont to commit. The sinner understands clearly that what he is about to think, or say, or do, is absolutely forbidden and grievously sinful; he knows that it will insult God Who is all purity and holiness; that it will offend our Saviour Who died upon the cross for his soul; and yet with sufficient reflection and full consent of the will he proceeds to do it.

How many persons there are who have been guilty of such ingratitude at some time or other in their lives! How many there are whose souls even at this moment are black with mortal sin unconfessed and unforgiven! "Woe unto them", says the apostle St. Jude in his inspired epistle, speaking about such persons who pass their lives in mortal sin; "Woe unto them, for they have gone in the way of Cain---feasting together without fear, feeding themselves; clouds without water, which are carried about by the winds,—trees of the autumn, unfruitful, twice dead,---raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own confusion,—wandering stars, to whom the storm of darkness is reserved forever!" (JUDE, 11-13).

There are such men and women in every parish, who are not ashamed to appear in the light of open day with dead souls in their living bodies—who resemble

the sepulchres that our Saviour spoke of, which on the outside were white and glistening in the sunshine, but within filled with stench and corruption. Some such persons might be here tonight. If God will give them light to see the wretched condition of their souls, if He will lend them strength to change their hearts,—let them turn to Him now, in sorrow for the past, in firm and fixed resolve for the future, and throw themselves in spirit at His feet. Filled with confusion at the sight of their sins, but moved at the same time by trust and confidence in God's goodness, let them go to "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, patient and of much compassion, and true, Who keeps mercy unto thousands, Who takes away iniquity and wickedness and sin."

We were created free. God has left our souls in our own hands to save them or to lose them. It is His desire that we should love Him, but He will not force us. He would not have us serve Him like machines, which do their work without any choice on their part, but like free men and women. Therefore He has given each one of us a free will. At every moment of our lives we shall be free, we shall have the choice, between good and evil, between right and wrong, to love God or to despise Him, to serve Him or to disobey Him, to be in His friendship or to give up that divine friendship for the state of mortal sin.

And this being the case, even though you were conscious of no mortal sin in your past life, that would not give you full security for the future. There was a time in the life of the most hardened sinner, when he was guiltless of mortal sin. The libertine, the drunkard, the common thief, the merely nominal Catholic,—they were, all alike, once innocent children. Those who are now weighed down to the earth with mortal sins, have one sweet remembrance in common with the most virtuous: the remembrance of that childhood, with "heaven lying around it," where our sinless souls were so very near to God. And hardened sinners did not leave that state of innocence all at once, but only by slow degrees. First it was the child's soul, pure and clean from its baptism, bright and shining with the light of heaven. Then it was the same soul, yielding to little temptations, sullying itself with little sins. Finally it is a stained, blackened soul, dimmed and tarnished by contact with a sinful world by weakness in temptation, the soul of the reprobate who lives in mortal sin as a fish lives in the water, and has given up faith and virtue and manhood itself for the enjoyment of his brutal pleasures.

Therefore let us pray to God "in fear and trembling" when we think of the freedom He has given us. Even though there was no grievous sin in your past life, do not rely upon yourself for your future, but chiefly upon God. And let us guard ourselves, not against mortal sin merely, but against every deliberate approach to it, not forgetting what the Sacred Scriptures tell us, that

"he who contemneth small things, shall fall by little and little" (ECCLUS., XIX., 1).

But if you remember that you have committed grievous sin in your past, then there is all the more need for prayer and watchfulness in the present. It may well be that you have abandoned your sins and confessed them and that you are standing firmly now in God's friendship and love. Yet do not altogether forget **past** weakness. Consider our first parents in Paradise, how firmly they stood, how strong they were, not with our fallen nature, but with a nature free from concupiscence, unweakened by sin, fresh from the hands of the Creator; yet notwithstanding their original strength, they no sooner forgot God than they abandoned Him and fell into original sin. Remember your own former weakness: how often have you stood, firmly as you thought, in the friendship and grace of God; and the serpent tempted you, and you yielded to the temptation; and God, holding out everlasting happiness, was behind you; and in your hands was the momentary pleasure, the gilded clay, the sugar-coated bitterness of mortal sin. What has happened to you once, may happen again whenever you shall cease to guard yourself against temptation and to ask for God's assistance. "Be sober and watch," said the Prince of the Apostles, "because your adversary the devil as a roaring lion goeth about seeking whom he may devour" (I. PET., V., 8). Those victories which Satan gained over you in the past, he will be able to wrest from you again in the future, if you should ever cease to struggle against him.

We are never safe except when we are struggling against our weaknesses. Our life upon this earth is a battle against the powers of evil, and we cannot for one moment lay down our arms. We resemble a man in a boat rowing himself up towards the source of some river: he cannot rest upon his oars; his boat will be moving either upwards or downwards; if he is not pulling himself upwards by the strength of his arms, the current will be sweeping him down to the river's mouth. And so with us. Unless you are rising towards God by struggling against the current of sin and temptation which besets you, you will be sinking lower and lower, from iniquity to iniquity, from mortal sin to mortal sin, until you shall have reached the bottomless pit of "everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels."

Therefore let us examine ourselves tonight and see how it is with us. Glance over the lives you are living. How much of virtue is there in them and how much of vice? Are you regular at the Mass on Sunday and at the yearly Easter Communion, the omission of which for a Catholic is a mortal sin? How often does blasphemy,—I don't mean swearing and cursing nor the taking of God's names in vain, which are generally only venial sins, but *blasphemy*, in the correct sense of that awful word,—how often does grievous neglect of chil-

dren, how often do *serious* disobedience, disrespect, dishonour to parents come into your days or weeks or months? How often does impurity, theft or cheating on a large scale, grievously scandalous talk, or drunkenness, fall upon your soul, like a foul leprosy upon the body, in all the hideousness and horror of mortal sin?

Question yourself and answer honestly and fearlessly, here in the Real Presence of our Divine Lord: Are you struggling manfully against your weaknesses? Are you "fighting the good fight,," falling again and again perhaps into indeliberate venial faults, but shrinking with horror and loathing from everything which approaches to mortal sin?—If so, it is well with you. Into indeliberate venial sins even "a just man shall fall seven times and shall rise again" (PROV., XXIV., 16).

Or are you quite careless and indifferent, giving yourself up to mortal sins, relapsing into such sins day after day without a struggle or even an earnest desire to improve yourself?—If that be your state, then you are in grave and serious danger, and it is time for you to change your life and improve it, to begin that struggle for salvation which so far you have not been making, but which it is necessary for all to make.

And in this struggle who shall assist us? God, of course. When we are filled with dread of mortal sin, it is quite natural to turn to God. From the greatest of all evils we fly for refuge to Him Who is the greatest Good, most powerful to assist us, most merciful to pardon us. And so tonight, in view of past and present sins, and in view of the temptations which will lie in our future pathway, let us turn to Him, humble, sorrowful and truly penitent, for pardon and protection. By means of an honest, heartfelt Act of Contrition here and now, and by means of a good Confession at the earliest opportunity, let us go to "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, patient and of much compassion, and true, Who keeps mercy unto thousands, Who takes away iniquity and wickedness and sin."

XXV.—SAINT PATRICK..

(HIS FEAST.)

“Behold, a great priest, who in his day pleased
God, and was found just in His sight.”

IN the Mass of today's feast these words are applied to the Apostle of Ireland, St. Patrick. He is a saint of the universal Church, and his name is honoured throughout the whole world, and his intercession is invoked by pontiff, bishop, priest and layman.

Now what is *our* interest in St. Patrick?

As Catholics, of course, we are interested in all the saints of God; and we know that they have a better right than any other class of famous persons to be called “great men.” Worldly newspapers and magazines and histories and encyclopaedias may devote whole pages to rulers and politicians for every half-column which they give to the saints; but enlightened members of God's Church have a solider knowledge and a juster judgment. In the eyes of the world warriors, statesmen, scholars and artists are the great men of the earth; in the light of a sound philosophy the saints are greater than all of these. The saints were the greatest men who ever lived, because they came nearest of all men to accomplishing the noblest end which man can work for.

But what is our special interest in St. Patrick, apart from this general interest which we have in all the saints? And why do very many of us honour him more even, in some respects, than we honour the others?

Because he loved a land which many of us love. Because his heart and soul were devoted to the green hills of Ireland. Ireland was the scene of his life-work, the object of his affection, the idol of his heart. With him during the period of his earthly life, as with millions of his children since that time, it was first God above all things and then Ireland; and it was a labour of love for Him, as well as a labour of faith, to freely spend his life's best years in converting the Irish people from the darkness of idolatry to the splendour and glory of the Catholic religion.

To the Irish people then, and to people of Irish descent, St. Patrick is not only the apostle of their motherland; he is also their father in the faith. The Hebrew nation was descended from one patriarch, and it might be truly said that every man, woman and child of that great nation had the blood of Abraham flowing in his veins. In like manner those of us who are of Irish extrac-

tion, may be said, not according to the flesh but according to the faith that is in us, to be descended from St. Patrick. It was he who baptized our earliest Christian ancestors. It was he, under God, who gave them the faith, the hope, the love of Christ which they and their offspring have clung to through so many centuries. And as the Hebrew nation loved and praised the name of their great father Abraham, so the Irish people, and people of Irish blood, scattered all over the face of the earth, but worshipping God still in every land which the sun shines upon, revere and honour the memory of St. Patrick.

Yet this spiritual father of the Irish people was no native of Ireland. On the contrary, it was as a stranger and a captive that he caught his first glimpse of that country. In the Book of Armagh we have his "Confession" yet,—true copy of a little account of himself which he wrote with his own hand. The genuineness of this little work is admitted nowadays by scholars of all creeds and nations. And in this "Confession" St. Patrick tells us that he was "nearly sixteen years of age" when he was first brought to Ireland as a prisoner of war. It was a hard fate in those days of the fourth and fifth centuries to become a prisoner of war. The unfortunate captives, no matter how refined their homes and how tender their breeding might have been, were sold into slavery, and oftentimes condemned to the most menial occupations. And thus St. Patrick, who tells us himself that he was noble, his father having been a decurion of the Western Empire, and whose very name is a proof of his nobility, was placed as a slave upon a certain hillside to tend sheep daily "in snow and ice and rain."

"After I had come to Ireland," he writes in his "Confession," "I was daily tending sheep; and I prayed frequently during the day; and the love of God and His faith and fear increased in me more and more. And my spirit was stirred, so that in a single day I have said as many as a hundred prayers, and in the night nearly the same. I remained in the woods, and on the mountain even before the dawn I was roused to prayer in snow and ice and rain; and I felt no injury from it. Nor was there any slothfulness in me such as I notice now, because the spirit was then fervent in me. And there one night I heard a voice while I slept saying to me: 'Thou dost fast well; fasting, thou shalt soon go to thy country.' And again after a very short time I heard a response saying to me: 'Behold, thy ship is ready.' And the place was not near, but perhaps about two-hundred miles distant; and I had never been there, nor did I know anyone who lived there."

It was in the sixth year of his captivity, and therefore when he was about twenty-one years of age, that St. Patrick made his escape in a ship from the coast of Ireland. But he left that country only with the mind of returning thither better prepared to preach the gospel to its people. It was with this

purpose that he studied for some years in the monasteries of France and Lerins and was ordained a priest. Then he went to Rome, was commissioned by Pope St. Celestine I, and was sent forth by the pontiff upon his mission, even as Christ had sent forth the apostles to "teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

We all know the grand results of that mission. We have heard the wondrous story even from our childhood of how quickly and how firmly St. Patrick planted the cross of Christ in the soil of Ireland. Even before his death he could see the glorious fruits of his labours, a nation converted to the faith. He could quote the inspired words of the prophet Osee: "And I will say to that which was not My people: 'Thou art My people.' And they shall say: 'Thou art my God.' And in the place where I said to them 'You are not My people,' it shall be said to them: 'Ye are the sons of the living God' " (OSEE, II, 24. and I., 10.). And he could continue in his own words, as he does in the "Confession": "Wherefore behold how in Ireland they who never had the knowledge of God and hitherto only worshipped unclean idols, have lately become the people of the Lord, and are called the children of God. The sons of the Scoti and the daughters of princes are seen to be monks and virgins of Christ."

All this had come to pass during the lifetime of one man, during the zealous, energetic lifetime of St. Patrick. He had travelled through the length and breadth of the kingdom, preaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments. He had baptized thousands with his own hands. He had built churches and monasteries, ordained priests and consecrated bishops. He passed to his eternal reward on the seventeenth of March about fourteen-hundred-and-seventy years ago; and in less than a hundred years after his death, during the course of the sixth century, the Gospel had spread from one end of the kingdom to the other, "from village to city and from palace to cottage" (ALZOG).

Such was the result of St. Patrick's mission, a result as firm and lasting as it was quick and complete. Fifty generations of men have lived and died since his times, fourteen centuries of years have passed over the earth, and Ireland is as Catholic today as she was when he closed his eyes upon her in death. The nation of his choice, the land of his adoption, the country which he loved and to which he gave his life, has lost since then nearly everything which the world considers valuable; but she has kept the faith. She has been deprived of her wealth, her education and culture, her freedom; she has passed through fourteen-hundred years of joy and woe. But during those first seven-hundred years of peace and plenty as well as during the latter seven-hundred years of poverty, oppression and persecution she has remained true to the teachings of St. Patrick and the faith of Jesus Christ.

What wonder then that the whole world should honour St. Patrick,—that we, his children, should honour him more even than the others? What wonder that we should be proud of our connection with that ancient nation which he made Christian by his labours, of the Irish names which prove our descent from that nation, of the blood of martyrs which is flowing in our veins? It is natural that we should be proud, but our pride must be a holy pride; we must remember our Christian ancestors and our faithful motherland only in order to imitate them and do honour to her.

Those dastardly children and grandchildren of Irishmen, those recreant descendants of Irishmen, who have turned their backs or are turning their backs upon the ancient Church,—they can feel neither legitimate pride nor honest joy on the feast of St. Patrick; it would be well for them to change their names, if that is at all possible, and to forget their forefathers as quickly as they can. What advantage is it to remember those parents, grandparents ancestors who would scorn to remember them, and would blush to have to acknowledge them for their offspring? What honour is it to bear those ancient, noble names, which in their provincial, untravelled ignorance they are half ashamed of? What use to remember the old flag, what happiness to be reminded of it, if they be deserters or traitors?

You need not join the opposing forces, in order to be a deserter; it is enough if you meanly throw down your arms and slink away from the colours and the roll-call. You need not change your religion; it is enough if you drop it. It isn't necessary for you to become either a freemason or a Protestant; you are just as truly a deserter if you absent yourself long enough from the Catholic church, and thus cease to be a Catholic. Persist in staying away from the Mass on Sundays without a sufficient reason, persist in staying away from the yearly Easter Communion, give up being a Catholic even *without* becoming a Protestant or a freemason,—and you are a deserter, an apostate, a turn-coat; and honest men and decent women of every creed and nation, if they thoroughly understand the situation, will not care for your company.

If we are continually breaking either the laws of God or the laws of His Church,—if we are leading worthless, selfish lives of mortal sin,—we only help to cast odium upon the land of our ancestry as well as upon our holy religion. But if we strive to live temperate, pure, Catholic lives, then the land from which we sprang, and the religion in which we were reared, and the glorious apostle who brought that holy religion to that favored land, will all be honoured in us.

May St. Patrick today intercede for us, where he shines in glory among the saints of God, and obtain for us the grace of always bravely and sincerely professing our holy apostolic religion; so that, like so many millions of his children who have gone before us in the way of peace, we also may live and die in the ancient faith, which he laboured for so grandly!

XXVI.—THE NECESSITY OF CONFESSION.

(LENT.)

“All things are of God, Who hath reconciled us to Himself by Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation. For God indeed was, in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself;-----and He hath placed in us the word of reconciliation. For Christ therefore we are ambassadors, God as it were exhorting by us. For Christ we beseech you, be reconciled to God” (II. COR., V., 18. et sqq.).

THESE inspired words say a great deal about reconciliation. We all know what reconciliation is. Two friends disagree about something, and their friendship is broken, By some means or other they are brought together again. Each acknowledges his fault and asks the other's forgiveness, and they join hands and are reconciled with each other. Once more there is peace between them and friendship. And that is what is meant by reconciliation.

So when the sinner commits a mortal sin, all friendship is destroyed between him and God. But let him be truly sorry for having offended God and firmly resolved not to offend Him any more; then let him enter the confessional and kneel before the priest and confess his sin to him and to that God Whose minister he is; and his sin will be forgiven. The penitent sinner is restored to the friendship of God. Between God and that soul which has offended Him but which is truly sorry for having done so, there is reconciliation. And the means by which they become reconciled, the “ministry of reconciliation,” is the confessional and the sacrament of penance.

I want to say a few words to you on the necessity of confession. There is no need of proving that confession is necessary, because you are Catholics and the necessity of confession is a part of your religious belief, an article of your faith. You would as easily be persuaded that men can live without eating, as be made to think that they can cleanse themselves from their sins without going to the priest and confessing them. We have been taught by the Church that confession is necessary for the forgiveness of sin, and whatever the Church teaches we believe, without waiting for proof.

Yet although we do not require to have the necessity of confession proved

to us, many of us need to be reminded of it. How many Catholics there are, who believe in the necessity of confession, and yet act as if they did not believe in it. How many there are who go to confession only as often as they are obliged to, just once a year. How many there are who pass for Catholics, and yet spend years without going to confession,—who receive this sacrament only on their death-beds, when the shadows of death are darkening over them, and the fear of God and of judgment forces them at length to seek a reconciliation with God.

"God hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation," says St. Paul. Is there need then for a ministry of reconciliation between God and us? Yes. There is great need for it.

When the human race in the persons of our first parents sinned in the garden of Paradise, it offended God; and so long as the guilt of that offense remains in his soul, every individual of the human race is displeasing in the sight of God and sorely needs some means of becoming reconciled. The soul of the new-born babe is tarnished with that stain of original sin and remains displeasing to God until it is mystically cleansed by the waters of baptism. Baptism reconciles that soul to God. Baptism for that infant is the "ministry of reconciliation." But if the infant, after coming to the age of reason, falls into mortal sin, God is again offended; and unless God's mercy allow him the time and the means for becoming reconciled, he must suffer the awful consequences of his offence. Where shall he search for that means of becoming reconciled to God? Where shall he find that "ministry of reconciliation" which, St. Paul says, "God hath given to us?" He cannot receive a second time the sacrament of baptism; there must be some other sacrament which will answer to the purpose.

And what this other sacrament is, the Church teaches us. The popes and councils have ever been one and like-minded in proclaiming the necessity of penance for the remission of sin and in declaring that this sacrament of penance includes and must always include confession as an essential part. It will be enough for me to quote one example for you, the famous Council of Trent. Trent is a little town among the mountains of Tyrol; and in the old parish-church of that town the archbishops and bishops and doctors and learned men of the Catholic world met together more than three-hundred years ago to condemn heretical errors and to point out the true doctrines of the Catholic Church. Protestantism was quite new three-hundred-and-fifty years ago. There were numbers of men still alive who had heard the first Protestant preach. His immediate successors were preaching at that very time and burning churches and huntings monks all through Germany. But the bishops and learned men sat there calmly, praying and deliberating in the old parish-church, and minded

them no more than the mountain minds the howling of the winds. That was the Council of Trent. And under the special, infallible guidance of the Holy Spirit the united voice of that Council declared once more to the world: "If anyone should say that a penitent's confession is not required for the priest to absolve him, let him be anathema" (TRENT, SESS. XIV., CAN. 9.).

In the confessional then those who have committed mortal sin after baptism will find the "ministry of reconciliation" which the Apostle speaks of. When and where our Divine Saviour instituted it, there are two chief passages of Sacred Scripture which inform us. The first of these is in the Gospel according to St. Matthew: "Jesus came into the quarters of Caesarea Philippi: and He asked His disciples saying: 'Whom do men say that the Son of man is?' But they said: 'Some John the Baptist, and some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets.' Jesus saith to them: 'But whom do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered and said: 'Thou art Christ, the Son of the Living God.' And Jesus answering said to him: 'Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father Who is in heaven. And I say to thee: That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven'" (MATT., XVI., 13-19).

The second passage is in the Gospel according to St. John: It was Easter Sunday evening, and the disciples were assembled together in a certain room with the doors closed for fear of the Jews, for they had not yet been confirmed in courage by the descent of the Holy Ghost. Jesus came suddenly and stood in the midst of them, saying: "Peace be to you." He showed them His wounded Hands and Side to convince them that it was really He, and said again: "Peace be to you. As the Father sent Me, I also send you." Then He breathed on them: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained" (JOHN, XX., 19.).

It was thus that our Lord gave to the apostles and their successors the power of forgiving sins. Just as the governor of one of our states might choose out certain men whom he would make judges over the criminals of that state, so Christ chose and chooses from the body of the Church His apostles and priests. He makes them judges over all *spiritual* criminals. He gives them the power of forgiving the sinner or not forgiving him. He gives them the faculty of remanding the criminal to the prison-house of Satan, there to remain bound in the chains of mortal sin, or of loosening his bonds and admitting him to

the kingdom of heaven, brilliant with the spiritual sunlight of God's sanctifying grace. He gives them the keys of the kingdom of heaven;—the same keys which He himself possesses Who is called in the Apocalypse: "The Holy One and the True One, He That hath the key of David; He That openeth, and no man shutteth; shutteth, and no man openeth" (APOC., III., 7.). It is as judges then that priests forgive sins. And from this follows the necessity of confession, for a judge does not condemn nor forgive without first having the evidence brought before him and the accusation made in his presence. In the civil court this accusation is made by some third person; at the tribunal of penance it must be made by the criminal himself.

But the father-confessor is not merely the judge of our soul; he is also its physician. It is his duty to examine it and see what wounds it has received and what diseases it is most prone to. He must discover the snares which Satan is likely to lay in our path; he must instruct us in our duties; he must point out to us the safe path when we are following a dangerous one; encourage us when we are faint-hearted; comfort us when we are afflicted; lend us every other help which the wants of our soul may require. How can he do all this unless he knows the state of our soul? And how can he know the state of our soul, unless we lay it bare before him by confession?

The confession of sins is no new practice, but a very ancient one. As a sacrament of the Church confession goes back as far as the time of Christ; for it was our Divine Saviour Himself Who instituted all the seven sacraments and among the seven the sacrament of penance. But as a pious practice the confession of sins dates back to a period thousands of years before Christ. We find ample proof in the Bible that the confession of sins, far from being a novelty was practiced and commanded so early as the time of Moses. We find Moses himself laying down the law: "When a man or woman shall have committed any of all the sins which men are wont to commit,-----they shall confess their sin" (NUMB., V., 6, 7). We find the ancient prophet saying in the Book of Ecclesiasticus: "Be not ashamed to confess thy sins" (ECCLUS., IV., 31). We find King Solomon, whom God Himself called the wisest of men: ("And the Lord said to Solomon: 'I have given thee a wise and understanding heart, inso-much that there hath been none like thee before thee, nor shall arise after thee'" (III. KINGS, III., 11, 12.): we find this very Solomon teaching: "He that hideth his sins, shall not prosper: but he that shall confess and forsake them, shall obtain mercy" (PROV., XXVIII., 13). And finally, just before the coming of Christ, when St. John the Baptist was preparing the way of the Lord in the wilderness of the Jordan, we read that "there went out to him all the country of Judaea, and all they of Jersusalem, and were baptised by him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins" (MARK, I., 5).

So it is plain that even before the coming of our Lord the confession of sins was a common enough practice. It was left for our Saviour however to institute the sacrament of penance and thus make confession a strict necessity for all who have committed mortal sin after baptism. And so, wherever the Catholic Church is, in every country on this earth, there we see not only the lay people, but also priests and bishops and popes going regularly to confession. And what is true of the present time in this particular, has been true of all ages since the time of Christ.

This very fact is a proof of the necessity of confession. Most persons would not go to confession unless they knew that confession was necessary. There are few things more mortifying to the flesh, more humbling to human pride, more afflicting to self-love, than the confession of sins: to have an ugly, hidden wound rankling and festering in your soul and to lay bare that wound before the eyes of a weak, sinful mortal like yourself: to tell sins to the priest in confession which you would not mention for a thousand worlds to any other human being:—nothing but the command of God would make men think of it, nothing but the grace of God would give men the strength to do it.

The very fact that the hundreds of millions of Catholics who are spread all over the surface of the earth at this present time, go to confession so commonly and so regularly, is one of the most convincing proofs of the necessity of confession. If men and women come to the priest in the confessional and tell him their most shameful acts, their vilest thoughts, their most hidden sins, it is only because they are sure that Christ has made such confession a necessary means towards the salvation of their souls; it is because they know beyond a doubt that there are but two courses to choose between:—on the one hand, to remain in mortal sin, to die in mortal sin, to suffer through endless eternity for mortal sin;—on the other, to confess their sins and become reconciled to God.

To the apostles then and their successors, the bishops and priests of the Church, Christ has entrusted His Own Divine power of forgiving sins: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." To those bishops and priests He has given the ministry of reconciling souls to Him: "God hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation." From the bottom of our hearts let us thank God for having done so. Nobody knows how soon he may be in need of it, may sorely need to be reconciled and to have his sins forgiven. Some of you may need it even now. If there be any such among you, let them see to it. Let not the morning of Easter, when the earth itself is smiling and the sun rejoicing in the Resurrection of its Master, find any of your beautiful, immortal souls stained with the foul blemish of grievous sin. Come to us in the tribunal of penance. Be not afraid

to come. We are judges over sin, but if we were not merciful judges, we would be little like the Lord Who hath appointed us. "Christ hath placed in us the word of reconciliation. For Christ therefore we are ambassadors, God as it were exhorting by us. For Christ, we beseech you, be reconciled to God."

XXVII.—MYSTERIES.

(LENT.)

“**A** MYSTERY,” says the Baltimore Catechism, “is a truth which we cannot fully understand.” We have some little understanding even of mysteries. The Catechism does not say that we cannot understand them at all, but only that we cannot *fully* understand them.

Take for example the highest and deepest mystery of all, the mystery of the Blessed Trinity. We have some little understanding even of that: the great idea of Three in One, three Persons in one God. We know what three means and we know what one means. We know what is meant by a person; and in our own imperfect way we know what God is. So we have some little understanding even of this great mystery of the Blessed Trinity.

Yet neither we nor the wisest and holiest person in this world can ever in this life *fully* understand either the Trinity or any other of the Christian mysteries. God lets us see just a little part of these truths, but the rest is kept covered from our eyes. He lets us see enough of these mysteries to make it possible for us to reasonably believe in them. More than this we shall never see nor know nor understand about them, until the eyes of our soul are wide-opened for us by the angel of death.

So mysteries are truths which we cannot *fully* understand. Mysteries are above human reason; but they are never against human reason. If any doctrine were clearly against reason, it would be wrong for us to believe it. Such a doctrine would be no mystery at all, but an absurdity; for a mystery is a truth, whereas a doctrine clearly against reason would be an empty and self-contradictory falsehood. For example it would be a sin for us to try to believe that two and two are five, because it would be trying to destroy our reason and to make ourselves absurd.

But we need have no fear. As disciples of Christ and members of His Church we will never be asked to believe that two and two are five. We will never be asked to believe that three persons are one person or that three gods are one God or anything else that is contradictory and plainly against reason. What we do gladly believe is that three Persons are one God, a truth that is not contradictory, not *against* reason, although it is vastly *above* reason.

So too with the other mysteries of our faith. Never on this earth will we *fully* understand them, never on this earth will they be perfectly clear to us, like two and two are four; but on the other hand never, either, will they be

absurd, self-contradictory and against reason, like two and two are five. The bitterest, and at the same time the most cunning and most highly-educated, enemies of Christ our Lord and of His Church have striven for nineteen-hundred years, and are striving still, to find something clearly against reason in our Catholic faith; but they have miserably failed and will ever miserably fail. For reason and true religion are as twin-daughters of the one kind God; and they can never contradict each other, but must always agree together.

Our holy religion is filled with mysteries, with truths which we cannot *fully* understand. But it would be a very unreasonable man or woman who would find fault with it on that account.. This world too, with all its business and trades and professions and sciences, is filled with its own mysteries of a lower kind.

Ask a business-man in any season of business depression if he can *fully* understand just precisely what causes hard times. Ask any physician if he fully understands what keeps the human heart beating so regularly for a certain number of years, or if the other workings of the human body are free from mystery to him. The better a man studies or practises any trade or profession or science, the more vividly he realizes how filled it is with mysteries, how many are the things in it which he cannot fully understand. The Greek Pagan, Socrates, was thought to be the greatest philosopher of his times; and one of his favorite sayings was this: "I know nothing except that I know nothing." The wiser a man is, the humbler he is.

If you ever hear a man or woman say: "I'll believe only what I see," put that person down for a careless talker. Why, he doesn't even see his own brains, and yet of course he has a brain, at least a little soft, flabby one, and of course he believes in it. If you ever hear a person talk in this strain: "No mysteries for me; nothing but what I can clearly see and clearly account for. I'll never give my faith to anything which I cannot fully understand,"—be charitable enough to suppose that he doesn't fully understand what he is saying.

For as children we gave our faith to our parents and teachers. We never fully understood why this letter on the printed page meant "a" and that "b", but took their word for it. As apprentices we gave our faith to those who taught us our trade, as students to those who trained us to our professions. We give our faith now to the lawyer whom we consult and to the doctor whom we call in to prescribe for us, knowing very little about these matters ourselves nor ever fully understanding them. And so as Christians we give our faith to Christ our Lord and to His Church regarding religious truths,—truths which we cannot *fully* understand because they are mysteries, but which nevertheless we reasonably believe on His great word and authority.

XXVIII.—PRAYER.

(LENT.)

“You shall pray to Me, and I will hear you. You shall seek Me, and shall find Me” (JER., XXIX., 12.).

IN these words of the prophet Jeremiah the Lord promises us that He will hear us whenever we pray to Him; that we shall find Him whenever we seek Him. The Holy Scriptures are full of solemn promises like this, by which God has engaged Himself, if we might use the word, to hear and answer our prayers. Even in the Old Testament these promises are plentiful enough; but in the four Gospels of the New Testament they crowd the pages.

And these promises assure us that prayer obtains all things. It is in your power then to procure from God whatever is good for you by simply asking for it. You are in need of a certain virtue, or of the grace to overcome a certain temptation; you remain for years or for a lifetime without obtaining it, merely because you will not pray for it: either you will not take the trouble to ask for it at all; or when you do pray for it, you do not pray with the proper humility and trust in God; or you grow tired and become discouraged because it is not granted in just two weeks, and so do not continue praying for it long enough.

Prayer obtains all things. It is our own fault then if our souls are poverty-stricken. It's our own fault if we are barren of virtues and steeped in vice. We will not lift up our minds and hearts to God, to adore Him, to thank Him, to ask Him for our necessities. Whatever we need, we can have for the asking. But we lack the energy and the perseverance to ask, and to continue asking with all our heart. He will hear those who pray to Him. They who seek Him, shall surely find Him.

Have you ever read the New Testament, or even any one of its four Gospels? How often in their pages our Divine Lord assures us that no true prayer has ever been in vain, that no true prayer can ever be in vain. He tells us over and over again, in a hundred different ways, at a hundred different times and places, that our prayers are heard and answered. “I go to the Father,” He said at the Last Supper on the night before He suffered and died; “I go to the Father; and whatsoever you shall ask the Father in My Name, that will I do: that the Father may be glorified in the Son” (JOHN, XIV., 13.). He almost prays to us to pray to Him. He almost entreats us to ask Him for whatever we desire: “Hitherto you have not asked anything in My Name. Ask, and you shall

receive, that your joy may be full" (JOHN, XVI., 24.). "Ask, and it shall be given you," He said; "seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened" (LUKE, XI., 9, 10). On another occasion He spoke to His disciples in parables. Bread and fish and eggs were the favorite food of those Galilean fishermen. Suppose you ask your earthly father here for bread, our Saviour said to them, will he give you a stone? Suppose you beg him for fish, will he pass you a serpent? And if you ask him for an egg, will he hand you a scorpion? If you then with all your imperfections and iniquities, our Divine Saviour continued, "know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father from heaven give the good Spirit to them that ask Him!" (LUKE, XI., 13). "Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in My Name, He will give it you" (JOHN, XVI., 23.).

Certainly then we have very good reasons for feeling confidence in prayer. How can we doubt the power of prayer, unless we distrust the promises of Christ? "God is not as a man, that He should lie," says the inspired writer, "nor as the son of man, that He should be changed. Hath He said then, and will He not do? Hath He spoken, and will He not perform?" (NUMB., XXIII., 19.). Fail to believe our Saviour's words, and you cease to be a Christian. Refuse to trust the promises of Christ, and you are entirely out of place here in the church of Christ; your place is in the lodges of the secret-societies, in the camps of the free-thinkers, in the musty, fruitless schools of the agnostics,—anywhere save in the Catholic Church. But if we believe our Saviour's promises, as certainly we do, then why do we not live and act according to our belief, and be consistent? If we really believe that prayer is all powerful with God, why do we not pray oftener for whatever we are in want of, and with greater confidence, and with longer perseverance?

Prayer is never in vain. St. Vincent de Paul notices that "not a single one of all those who addressed themselves to our Lord during His mortal life, met with a repulse." Is our Saviour any less kind, any less willing to grant our prayers now, than He was during those years? Surely not; whatever else changes, He does not change. If we would only ask with the same faith and perseverance, He would grant with the same kindness. The pages of the Gospels are covered with accounts of the prayers which He granted: the "ruler, for example, who had such faith that he knew that our Lord could raise his dead daughter to life by simply laying His Hand upon her: "Lord, my daughter is even now dead; but come, lay Thy Hand upon her, and she shall live," (MATT., IX., 18); The woman with the issue of blood, whose faith was greater still. She did not think it necessary to tell our Lord what she wanted,

because her great faith assured her that He knew it already. She did not even place herself in front of Him where He would see her with His bodily eyes, but crept up behind Him and touched just the hem of his robe, saying to herself: "If I shall touch only His garment, I shall be healed," (MATT., IX., 21). One of those two was a rich and powerful member of the ruling classes; the other was a poor woman; and Jesus granted the prayers of both.

And so He has always done,—during His mortal life, as well as at this present time. God is no respecter of persons; and every prayer offered to God, whether by rich or poor, old or young, educated or simple, has met with an answer. We do not always receive just what we ask for, because God knows better than we do what is good for us. But no one from the beginning of the world has ever prayed to God for anything with the right dispositions,—that is, with humility, and trust in God, and patient perseverance,—but that he has received from God in return either the favour which he asked for, or some other favour as good or better for him than that which he prayed for.

So that no prayer is ever in vain. There is nothing truer than this truth, that no prayer which we ever say, is useless. For every Mass which we attend, for every Communion we receive, for every Rosary or litany which we recite, for every Hail Mary that falls from our lips, we receive God's blessings, spiritual or temporal, in return, as surely and as exactly as we receive goods at the store for our dollars and cents.

Let us take a particular example. "Look at this old gentleman," some one might say. "He has been reciting the Beads every day of his life, he has been at Mass even on week-days as regularly as the sun rose; and he is none the wealthier for it. He has been praying to God all his days; and here he is now, at his seventieth year perhaps, with scarcely a dollar to his name, poor, and feeble, and dependent. Surely all his praying has done *him* little good."

On what grounds are they sure that it has done him little good? Can they see his soul? Or do they judge only from outside appearances? Can they even imagine what a deep and living faith God has poured into that old gentleman's heart in return for his years of prayer? What a bright hope is burning in his breast? What perfect resignation to God's Will, and peace and content, and happiness?

"But at least he has little of this world's goods to show for his prayer." Even so. What of it? Are this world's goods the heaven which we are working for and praying for? I know that in the eyes of the worldling they are all-important. I know that the worldling's grovelling soul, devoid of true love and true nobility, filled only with low and selfish earthly instincts, can see nothing higher or nobler on earth than money, and money-making, and the worldly pleasures and luxuries and honours which money brings to its possessor. I

know that in the worldling's little penny-wise mind no man is so fortunate as he who is rich and healthy and honoured in this life. But the Christian thinks otherwise. In the Christian's eyes there is only one thing strictly necessary,—to love God and serve Him in this world, to be happy with God in the next world;—this alone is necessary and all-important; everything else compared with this is secondary and of little consequence.

And in the light of this great truth, which is at the very foundation of our religion and at the very root of common sense, do they dare to say that an old man's life of prayer has done him little good? Let them wait and see. They are pronouncing their judgment altogether too soon. They are like a certain man who went into the theatre to look at a new play; and when the curtain rose, before the first scene was finished, before even forty words of the drama had been spoken by the actors, this man stood up in disgust exclaiming "The play is wretched!" and left the theatre. And those persons near enough to notice his hasty action whispered to one another: "That man is foolish. If he possessed any sense, he would wait at least until the first act was finished, before passing judgment on the play."

And so with them. They are passing judgment on that old gentleman's life before one act of his life is over. They are saying that all his prayers have done him little good, and saying it here on earth where his life has scarcely begun. What is the life of man? Is it sixty or seventy years? No. The life of man cannot be measured in years. It is eternal. It has a beginning, in this world; but it has no ending, either in this world or in the next. We commence to live in this life. But we continue to live in another life, whether willingly or in spite of ourselves, whether in heaven or in hell, forever and ever. Our lives are eternal; and the sixty or seventy years which we spend on this earth, are more insignificant, compared with the whole extent of those everlasting lives of ours, than one drop of salt water compared with the great, billowy ocean.

And the time is quickly coming to all of us, in a few short years sooner or later, when we shall all realize this more fully than we have ever yet realized it. And therefore let them wait a little before they pronounce that any life of prayer has been useless. Let them wait until they and that old gentleman stand before the judgment throne of Christ, and then say who is better off, then say who had more wisdom and more plain, common sense even in this world,—he, who spent an hour or so every day of his life in hearing Mass and saying his Rosary, or they, who were so busy and so absorbed in the affairs of this little world, that they could not give one minute of the day to God.

Prayer is never in vain; and the more one prays in this world, the happier one will be in the world to come. We have all to save our souls; and we cannot

save our souls without prayer. It is a necessary task, which each one must perform for himself. You cannot hire another person to do the good work for you. And you could more easily walk without using your feet than do the good work without prayer.

You pass the church by night or day in going to or from your home; and you remember that in it, farthest removed from the noise of the street, is an altar, and in the middle of the altar a tabernacle, and within the tabernacle a little golden cup which we call the ciborium, and in the ciborium under the appearances of bread that mysterious and wonderful Real Presence of our Divine Lord; and therefore as you pass the church-door, you bow your head if you are a woman, and if you are a man off goes your hat; that is prayer, an act of faith and adoration, short and simple, yet intensely pleasing to the Sacred Heart of our Divine Saviour.

At another time you enter the church to adore and pray; and as you are entering, your right knee touches the floor, and your head bows forward, and your heart and soul sink down in abasement and nothingness before His Divine Majesty Who is as truly present in the tabernacle as if your eyes beheld Him; that is prayer too, an act of humility and of adoration.

You awake in the morning; and immediately you call to mind the thought of God's presence. It is your first action of the day to sign yourself with the sign of the cross. You do your best to keep in mind this thought of God's presence while you are dressing and until you have finished your morning prayers. You bring it back often during the course of the day, saying to yourself now and then: "God is with me," "God is here," "God sees me now," being reminded of it perhaps when you hear a clock strike the hour, or when you take holy water, or pass a church, or see anywhere a crucifix or pious picture. And when temptations come, you think of God; quickly as lightning your mind flies up to Him for help; and cheerfully and without fretting or worry the temptation is banished and forgotten, and you are busy once more with thoughts and occupations which are not sinful. And at last the day comes to its close, and you say your night-prayers remembering that you are in the very presence of God; and you fall asleep as if in His arms, with the holy names of Jesus, Mary and Joseph on your lips, or that beautiful thought of the Psalms; "In peace, in Him, I will sleep and I will rest" (Ps., IV., 9).

And so, humbly, patiently, your life glides on. One day of prayer follows another, until at last, after all the little joys and woes of this imperfect life and after all the temporal pains of purgatory, heaven is gained forever, and prayer is changed into praise, even as sadness into joy and humiliation into everlasting glory.

That is prayer, a life of prayer. Because a life of prayer does not need to

be a life of extraordinary sacrifices and heroic virtues. It does not need to be the life of a saint or of a hero. We also, with all our faults and imperfections, if we only contrive in some way or other to keep ourselves free from mortal sin,—we also may hope to live a life of prayer.

Blessed and truly happy are we if we succeed in doing it. Happy is that man or woman, that boy or girl, who can say truthfully and sincerely with the royal prophet: "My eyes are ever towards the Lord.-----Look Thou upon me and have mercy on me.-----Keep Thou my soul and deliver me; I shall not be ashamed, for I have hoped in Thee!" (Ps., XXIV., 15-20).

XXIX. SAINT MARY MAGDALEN.

LUKE, VII., 36—50.

(LENT.)

“Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much.”

ST. Mary Magdalen is one of the great models of penitence. Therefore during this holy season of penance it will not be out of place for us to meditate upon her. The seventh chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke tells us the beautiful story of her conversion and pardon.

Jesus was at dinner in the house of Simon the Pharisee. And a woman that was in the city, a sinner, learning that He was there, came into the house bringing with her an alabaster box of precious ointment, and stood behind His Feet where He reclined at table, and began to wash those sacred Feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed them, and anointed them with the precious ointment. Then Simon the Pharisee wondered that Jesus should allow a public, notorious sinner to approach so near Him in this manner and to caress His Feet and wash them. But our Divine Lord knew Simon's inmost thoughts and answered them as if they had been spoken aloud: “Simon, I have somewhat to say to thee. -----Dost thou see this woman? I entered into thy house, thou gavest Me no water for My feet; but she with tears hath washed My feet, and with her hair hath wiped them. Thou gavest Me no kiss; but she, since she came in, hath not ceased to kiss My feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but she with ointment hath anointed My feet. Wherefore I say to thee: ‘Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much.’ And He said to her: ‘Thy sins are forgiven thee.-----Thy faith hath made thee safe: go in peace.’”

The Church has placed this gospel in the Mass of the feast of St. Mary Magdalen, and it is very likely that the penitent sinner of the gospel is none other than that great saint. She entered the house where our Lord was at table that evening, a wretch and an outcast, with years of vice and shame behind her. She left it forgiven for her sins, reclaimed from her evil habits, restored to virtue and to peace of soul, an earnest penitent who would mourn until the hour of her death for the sins of her past life and would suffer any grief, any sickness, any destitution rather than ever again grievously offend

Almighty God. When she went into that house, her soul was black with the sins of years; when she departed from it, she was pure in spirit and gifted with graces which made her afterwards a model of penitence to the converted sinners of all ages.

Such the Church of Christ holds her up for our imitation, a great sinner transformed into a great saint. We have imitated her already in sinning. We are not public sinners as she was; but there is no one of us who has not sinned in some way, there are few perhaps who have not sinned grievously.

And as we are like St. Mary Magdalen in having sinned, so we are also like her in being called to repentance. All without exception are called to repentance and to a better life, even as this blessed Mary of Magdala was called. It is often in the very midst of our sins that the call comes to us. She was leading her life of sin when our Lord first appeared to her. She saw His miracles, the proofs He gave of His Divinity; she saw the loving kindness of His Heart as He cured the sick and gave sight to the blind; she listened to the moving words which fell from His divine lips. She heard Him call all men to follow in His footsteps, and she felt that with the rest of mankind she too, no matter how debased and degraded, was now invited to rise from her sins and to lead a higher life.

In like manner we have been called to repentance,—how often and with what fruit, let each one answer for himself. We have not seen our Divine Lord face to face in the flesh, but we have seen His messengers and have felt His grace working within our hearts. We have not heard the words of life falling from His Own Divine lips, but we have read them in His holy Book and have heard them quoted by His priests. Every sermon which we have ever listened to, has been a call to repentance and to a higher life. Every good example which has moved us even for the shortest moment, has been a call to a higher life. Every ray of religious light which God has poured into our minds, every virtuous impulse which He has awakened in our hearts, has been a call to a higher life.

Therefore as we are like St. Mary Magdalen in having sinned, so we are also like her in being called to repentance. May God assist us to complete our resemblance to this great saint by obeying His loving call, even as she obeyed it!

She yielded to it at once. She entered the house where our Lord was at table, her heart overflowing with sorrow and shame, with sincere and honest humility, but above all with love for Him. Free from pride and even from human respect, she placed herself behind Him at His feet in sight of all the guests, and poured forth to Him in tears and groans her sorrow, her love, her utter wretchedness, her feeble, almost despairing cry for help, speaking to

Him by her actions rather than by words, washing His feet with her tears and drying them with the hair of her head and kissing them and anointing them with the precious ointment. Surely there was true contrition in her heart,—such perfect contrition as only springs from the purest love of God. Surely Mary of Magdala was burning with that purest love; for Jesus Himself there and then said of her: “Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much.”

Even as on that day Mary Magdalen entered the house of Simon the Pharisee to obtain forgiveness for her sins, so should we enter the confessional. Even as she found Jesus waiting to absolve her, so shall we find His priest, acting in His person, possessing from Him that same wonderful power of forgiving sins which Jesus Christ possesses. And well will it be for us if we approach this sacrament with the best dispositions,—that is, not only with fear of hell or desire of heaven as the foundation of our contrition, but also, and above all, with true love of God at the bottom of our sorrow for all offences against Him. Every supernatural motive for sorrow is good in its own way. The desire of heaven, the ardent longing for its unending happiness, is a good motive for contrition. Fear of the everlasting fire is also a good motive. But the love of God, the pure unselfish love of Him Who for our sake stooped down from His eternal glory, and made Himself a little man such as we are, and in torture and agony died for us,—that is the best motive of all. That strong, unselfish love of God produced the perfect sorrow in Mary Magdalen which swept away her crimes as if a lightning flash of divine mercy had shrivelled them, and changed her in one blessed moment from sinner into saint. Many sins were forgiven her because she “loved much.”

Our Divine Saviour was there that day encircled by those cold and calculating Pharisees, even as now He is in His Church surrounded by a heartless, material, money-worshipping world. Into the midst of those unbelieving and unfeeling worldings, like a ray of sunshine into a cold room, this woman came, despised, soiled and sin-stained, but at least not cold,—burning with divine love, repenting, sorrowing,—straight to our Saviour’s blessed feet. What a consolation it was to Him to receive back into His mercy this poor, abandoned, sinful soul! “Thy sins are forgiven thee. Thy faith hath made thee safe: go in peace.” What joy was in His Heart as He spoke those healing words! “There shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance” (LUKE, XV., 7). “There shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance” (XV., 10). And if there is joy in Heaven and joy before the angels of God at a sinner’s repentance, surely there is infinite joy in the Heart of our

Saviour, surely the sacred Heart of Jesus glows and shines with divine gladness when even the least or the worst of us comes back to Him! The prodigal son and the erring daughter are always welcome in their Father's home. "Doth He not leave the ninety-nine in the desert, and go after that which was lost until He find it? and when He hath found it, lay it upon His shoulders rejoicing?" (LUKE, XV., 4, 5).

How He loves and cherishes and honours us if we stay with Him after returning and thus persevere to the end! How He fills us even on this tearful earth with resignation and contentment! How He clothes us with everlasting glory in the great world beyond this! Nothing is too good for the repentant sinner if he only perseveres in his repentance.

Nothing was too good for St. Mary Magdalen after her conversion. She was allowed to follow our Divine Saviour, to be near Him, to wait upon Him, to attend to His wants. She was one of the holy women who ministered to Him during His stay in Galilee and who afterwards went with Him up to Jerusalem. She was near Him all through His sacred Passion. She was near Him at His Death. She stood at the foot of the cross with His Own blessed Mother, the penitent sinner beside the Immaculate One in that hour of sorrow. It is St. John himself who tells us this. He says in his Gospel: "There stood by the cross of Jesus His Mother, and His Mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalen," (JOHN, XIX., 25).

Afterwards when they laid His lifeless Body in the sepulchre, Mary Magdalen "beheld where He was laid" (MARK, XV., 47), and from His burial to His resurrection hovered almost constantly about the tomb. And St. Mark informs us that rising from the dead early on that great Sunday morning, He "appeared first to Mary Magdalen, out of whom He had cast seven devils," (MARK, XVI., 9). "On the first day of the week," St. John says in his Gospel, "Mary Magdalen cometh early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre: and she saw the stone taken away from the sepulchre. She ran therefore, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and saith to them: 'They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid Him'" (JOHN, XX., 1, 2). Then when Peter and John ran to the tomb as quickly as they could, and found it empty, with only the face-napkin and the linen cloths lying there, and so went back to their home again, Mary Magdalen, who had followed them to the tomb, did not follow them when they left it. "The disciples therefore departed again to their home." St. John continues. "But Mary stood at the sepulchre weeping: now as she was weeping, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre: and she saw two angels in white, sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the Body of Jesus had been laid.

They say to her: 'Woman, why weepest thou?' She saith to them: 'Because they have taken away my Lord: and I know not where they have laid Him'" (JOHN, XX., 10-13). Even while she was speaking these words, something made her turn from those bright angel forms, and there behind her she "saw Jesus standing." She must have been distracted by her grief and half-blinded with her tears, because at first she did not recognize Him. Then "Jesus saith to her: 'Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?'" (JOHN, XX., 15). And she, thinking that it was the gardener who had charge of the grounds where the tomb was, and her whole mind taken up with worry about the beloved lifeless Body which was gone from that tomb, replied almost without looking at Him: "Sir, if thou hast taken Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away." Jesus saith to her: "Mary;" and turning straight to Him at that dear, familiar sound of her own beloved name, she recognized at last her Lord and her God; and fell down at His blessed feet sobbing out the one word "Master."

So her love and her solicitude for Him were finally rewarded, and her sorrow changed into joy. But many years of this life still remained for her after our Lord's ascension. The inspired writings tell us nothing more about her, but universal tradition affirms that she spent many years of severe and holy penance on this earth before death came to her. Then after the penance the glory: after the cross the crown. Then in heaven at length she was allowed to enter once more and forever into His divine presence, Who formerly on this earth had pardoned her so many sins for having loved Him so much.

So shall it be with those who imitate her,—who truly love Him and for His love turn away at any cost from mortal sin: on earth peace and consolation will be theirs no matter what their trials; in heaven unspeakable and everlasting happiness in His divine company.

Therefore we may all profit from the history of St. Mary Magdalen. Those who are in the state of grace, have much to learn from her life of holy penance after her conversion. They can scarcely perform such extraordinary works of penance as she performed, because God does not call most men to extreme penances; but they can remember that He is always pleased to receive from us the ordinary penances of ordinary lives, offered in the proper spirit. When we abstain from flesh meat on Fridays throughout the year, when we fast during Lent, we can bear in mind that we are performing these works of penance in atonement for our sins. We can offer up our sickness, our little troubles and afflictions, all the pains and labours of our daily lives in satisfaction for our past offences against God; and we may be sure that our Divine Lord will receive them most graciously, and will forgive us many sins for having loved Him much.

But if any of us are stained at this moment with the foulness of mortal sin, for these also there is a lesson to be learned from St. Mary Magdalen, a lesson which they may take away with them from church and keep in their hearts to the end of their lives, a lesson of hope and trust in God's goodness, of reliance on the kindness, the mercy, the warm, pitying, forgiving spirit of our Divine Saviour. To them I would say: Here and now make an act of true and heartfelt love for God, and found upon it an act of contrition with the purpose of confessing at the first convenient opportunity. Then come to us in the confessional, even as Mary of Magdala went to our Divine Master in the house of Simon the Pharisee. Do not fear to come. Do not fail to come through shame or through any other human weakness. Come with God's love in your heart, with humility, with true contrition and the earnest purpose of bettering yourself; and although your sins be as black as night and as many as the sands on the shore, yet the infinite mercy of our loving Saviour will gladly destroy them and sweep them away.

St. Mary Magdalen stood at the foot of the cross during the blood-stained Sacrifice of Mount Calvary. Even so we often kneel at the foot of the altar while that same great Sacrifice is offered in an unbloody manner. Kneeling here to-day, let us ask her to intercede for us; and let us pray to our crucified Lord that through her intercession He may grant us the grace to imitate in our own weak way her holy, penitential life.

XXX. WHERE MIRACLES WOULD FAIL.

(PASSION SUNDAY.)

JOHN, VIII., 46—59.

THE history of the ancient Hebrews is the history of a people intensely ungrateful to God. They were God's chosen people; yet in return for the love which God lavished upon them, they gave Him scorn and hatred. Generation after generation and age after age through their whole history of two-thousand years they disobeyed God and turned their backs upon Him, notwithstanding the miracles which He worked almost continually in their favour. The laws of nature were suspended before their eyes again and again. The sun stood still in the heavens at the prayer of Josue. The Red Sea divided itself into two crystal walls to give them a dry passage between. And yet their sins were so offensive in God's sight, that God said to their Leader, Moses: "How long will this people provoke Me? How long will they not believe Me, for all the signs that I have wrought before them?" (NUMB., XIV., 11). Still He was patient with them to the last, using every means to draw them to Him. One by one He sent them His inspired messengers, the prophets. His angels came down from heaven to bring them His commands. Finally He sent His Own beloved Son, Who performed miracles before them which cast all their former miracles into the shade. And how did they welcome Him? St. John tells us in his Gospel: "The chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said: 'What do we, for this man doth many miracles?' From that day therefore they devised to put Him to death" (JOHN, XI., 47—53). And the people received Him no less unkindly than their chief priests; for when He told them Who He was, declaring solemnly: "'Before Abraham was made I am,' they took up stones to cast at Him'" (JOHN, VIII., 58, 59); and when a heathen governor came out before them pleading for Him, they shouted "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" until the voice of the governor was drowned in the uproar that they made.

The history of this nation seems so strange to us, that we can scarcely believe it. "They must have been ungrateful people," we say to ourselves, "to have such warnings and pay no heed to them: to have God working miracles before their very eyes, and to forget those miracles almost at once, and fall back into their sins. If *we* only had their chances, what a life we would lead! If *we* might behold real miracles every day, what saints we would be!"

And yet these people were not so different from us in most regards. Their history is only the history of the whole world. We have the same corrupt and fallen human nature which they had, and only too often, it leads us into the same sins into which it led them. Their selfishness and want of gratitude, their utter heartlessness towards God, their obstinacy, unbelief, impurities and intemperance are seen almost as commonly now as they were seen among the ancient Hebrews. They were just such men and women as we are, with this difference, that they had abundance of miracles, whereas we have not.

If we had an abundance of miracles,—if we had all the miracles worked among us which the Hebrews had performed among them,—would we be any better than they were? Let us not answer too quickly that we would be. It is not an outward miracle which makes a man good. It is the inward change of heart, and the inward grace of God producing and maintaining that change. And it is very possible that all the miracles of Jewish history might not make the generality of men and women nowadays any better than they made the Jews.

I know that there are people in the world who say: "If the Gospel were written on the sun, I would obey it." Unbelievers have said this to excuse their unbelief. Great sinners have said it to console themselves when their consciences upbraided them for the sins they had committed. But it is not true. If the Gospel with the Ten Commandments were written across the blue sky from east to west in letters of light, those very people would neither believe them nor obey them. They would walk along through life with their heads bowed down to the earth until they had forgotten that there was a sky above them. They would scoff and sneer at the persons who should call their attention to the writing on it. They would be too lazy and stupid, or too stubborn and headstrong, to lift up their faces and read for themselves.

Why should we think that miracles would cause any change in us? Why should the sight of a miracle make you any better than you are? Do you doubt the existence of God and His power? No. Have you any doubt as to what you ought to do? Not the slightest. Do you doubt for example that the storm and the sunshine come from Him, that the stars and the moon and the glorious sun are the works of His hands, that the bounty of the autumn and the gladness of the springtime come and go at His command? You do not doubt it in the least. Nor do you doubt that it is your duty to obey Him Who made the world and you, and Who provided so tenderly for all that He has made. Yet knowing all this, you cannot bring yourselves to do what you know you should do. Knowledge is not what we need to save our souls. We have knowledge enough already. And for that matter what new knowledge would the sight of a miracle impart to us?

What would it teach us about God and our duties to God, that we do not know without it?

But you may say that it would stir you up. It would awaken you from your sleep and set you thinking. And no doubt it would startle you for the moment; but would not that arousal soon be quieted? Even in our present-day experience there are numbers of things to startle us. Everyone nearly is stirred up more than once in his life by the accidents that are happening so frequently around us. Everyone at some time or other awakes to the fact that he has a soul to save, and gives some thought to its salvation. But how long does this awakening last? How often have you been startled during your past lives, in watching at a death-bed, in witnessing some dreadful accident, in learning that some person whom you knew very well had been cut off suddenly without sacrament or priest. And you have said to yourself: "Now this will be a lesson for me which I will never forget," and you have forgotten it the very next day perhaps and taken up the old sinful life again. How often, since that first time when you were a little child of five or six, have you come out from the confessional with the heavy load taken off your heart, wondering at the goodness of God, moved almost to tears by His mercy and forgiveness. And in your secret heart you were resolved that now at last you would go and sin no more. And in a month's time you were back at the old sins, buried again in the old evil habits, as cold and heartless towards God as if He had never done anything for you. If these natural lessons and warnings do us so little good, why do we think that a miracle would have any greater effect on us? There are some, whom a miracle might cause to change their lives, just as some are converted by these other warnings. But men and women in general, it is most likely, would be little better than they are, even though all the miracles of our Divine Saviour were worked before them.

But if someone came back from the dead,—if you saw the spirit of some departed friend who was dear to you,—well, what then? What would it teach you, which you do not know already? Have you any doubt that there is a spirit-world? Do you doubt that there is a life beyond the grave, and judgment after death, with eternal happiness for some of us and everlasting misery for others? Not in the least. You have the sure knowledge of it. And if this knowledge will not help you to do right, how would it help you to have a departed soul come back? "If they hear not Moses and the prophets," said our Divine Saviour, "neither will they believe, if one rise again from the dead" (LUKE, XVI., 31.)

Then what can move us, if miracles would not? Nothing can move you in this matter; you must move yourself. There are no motor-cycles nor

automobiles, no luxurious palace-cars nor sumptuous carriages on the road to Heaven. People cannot be carried there on soft cushions; they must make the journey on their own feet.

"Work out your salvation in fear and trembling," says Holy Writ (PHIL., II., 12). It does not say: "Wait till you are moved by some miracle, wait till some force outside of you takes you up and carries you along in spite of yourself." It does not say: "Wait until the priest works it out for you." But it says: "Work out your (own) salvation in fear and trembling." As it is you yourself who will be rewarded or punished in the future life, so it is you yourself who must do the good work or shirk it in this life. All the priests in the world could not save your soul for you. You must save your own soul. God Himself does not save our souls without our own consent and cooperation.

It is not for lack of miracles then that we do not serve God better. It is not for want of knowledge nor for want of strength and help. It is simply because we lack the will and the heart to serve Him. We like everything better than religion, as the Hebrews did before us. They liked wealth and luxuries, merry-makings and feasting; and so do we. They liked glitter and show and the fashions of this world. They wished to be let alone. They wanted to have their own way. They hated to be warring upon themselves, to be checking their senses and their passions, to be watching themselves continually; and so do we. We find everything easier than religion, as they did. We can pass a whole hour delightfully in gossiping about our neighbors or in reading the foul scandal-columns of the newspapers, but ten minutes of pious conversation or pious reading would be a dreadful bore to us. We can spend entire evenings, and sometimes lose whole hours of our regular sleep, at entertainments, socials, balls, without injuring our health; but if we had to get up for the week-day-morning Mass with its daily Communion, if we had to get up and lose *that* hour of sleep, it would break us down completely. We are industrious and thrifty, working every day for years and years, to acquire a little property in this world; but the idea of working earnestly, of honestly *working*, and watching ourselves in temptation, and praying day after day, for those treasures in Heaven which will never fade, the thought of this seldom enters our minds.

And yet this is the only sensible and prudent course for us to follow; not to wait for miracles or extraordinary graces: not to wait for the risky chance of a death-bed repentance: not to wait for the old age which perhaps will never come to us, nor even for the years of manhood: but to make a beginning now, in whatever period of life we may be. That is the only sensible course to follow; and may God grant us the grace to follow it. May He assist us

to begin once more here and now,—as many of us have begun so often before,—but this time with new experience, new strength, new fervour, and better success!

XXXI. THE SEVEN DOLOURS.

(The Feast—Friday of Passion Week or III. Sunday of September.)

OF all human beings the Blessed Virgin Mary was the one whom God loved most dearly and favored most highly. And yet her life upon this earth was in some respects the most sorrowful life which a mortal has ever lived. It was a life so full of sorrow, that she has been said again and again to have suffered more than all the martyrs; hence among other titles in that beautiful Litany of Loretto she is saluted by the Church as "Queen of Martyrs." Her greatest sufferings though were not of the body, but of the soul. Her sorrows, in a sense, were not her own; because she did not grieve for anything nor endure anything as happening to herself, but as happening to her Divine Son, Whom she loved far more dearly than she loved herself.

It was the Will of that Divine Son that all her afflictions and sorrows should come to her through Him, that so she might be most perfectly united with Him. And even as He suffered from the beginning of His life to the end of it, so she His Mother, seeing Him, loving Him, and compassionating Him, felt in her soul what He was enduring in His sacred Body—from the beginning of her motherhood until death. Now today, on this Feast of The Seven Dolours, the Church chooses out seven of the bitterest of our blessed Lady's sorrows, and holds them up for our meditation.

The first of these seven great sorrows was the prophecy of Simeon in the temple. Simeon was an aged and holy man, a teacher and a Rabbi among the Hebrews in Jerusalem, whose entire life had been like one continuous desire for the great Coming of the Messiah; and "he had received an answer from the Holy Ghost," the Scriptures tell us, "that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord," (LUKE, II., 26). So one day, while Simeon was in the temple praying, the Holy Family entered it. He saw the Infant Jesus in His Mother's arms, and recognized Him at once as the promised Messiah, the true God of heaven and earth. He took the Divine Child into his aged hands, and thanked God that He had allowed him to live so long as to see that blessed day: "Now, O Lord, Thou dost dismiss Thy servant." Now let me die, for mine eyes have seen Thy glory! But to the Infant's holy Mother Simeon said: "Behold this Child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection, of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be con-

tradicted. And thy own soul a sword shall pierce." (LUKE, II., 34, 35). And then, better even than before, Mary knew that a sword of sorrow would pierce her soul; and her wise mother-heart told her that such a sword of sorrow could only reach her soul by piercing first the Body of her Son. Then she more thoroughly knew all that her Divine Son would have to suffer: that He was set for a sign of contradiction: that He would be contradicted opposed, persecuted and slain. And this bitter knowledge and foresight made the first of her seven great sorrows.

It was not long until the second dolour fell upon her. Only too soon the sad prophecy of Simeon began to be fulfilled. "An angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying: 'Arise and take the Child and His Mother, and fly into Egypt: and be there until I shall tell thee. For it will come to pass that Herod will seek the Child to destroy Him.' And he arose, and took the Child and His Mother by night, and retired into Egypt" (MATT., II., 13, 14). It was thus that God made vain the bad purposes of this wicked king. For King Herod had sent for and spoken with those three wise men who came into Jerusalem shortly before, led by the star, asking everyone whom they met: "Where is He That is born King of the Jews?" (MATT., II., 2); and fearing foolishly that this new-born King would deprive him of his earthly Kingdom, Herod had commanded the massacre in Bethlehem of all male children who were not yet more than two-years old. It was not without cause then that the angel had appeared in sleep to Joseph, and that the Holy Family hastened away from Bethlehem in the night on that long and difficult journey. Nevertheless, this flight into Egypt was the second of Mary's seven bitter Dolours. She did not grieve on her own account, although no doubt there was much loneliness for her in that sad journey, and much thirst and hunger and faintness and fatigue; but the sword of sorrow pierced her soul more and more deeply as she thought of her Divine Son, Who had come down from heaven in love for men, and Who even so early in His innocent life was being received by men with hatred and cruelty.

Jesus had grown up to be twelve years of age when His blessed Mother experienced her third great sorrow. It was the custom of the Holy Family to go up from Nazareth to Jerusalem each year at the Paschal time, in order to visit the temple; and on this particular occasion they had completed their visit and had returned a day's journey towards home, when they discovered that the Divine Child had remained behind them in Jerusalem. Then "they sought Him sorrowing" (LUKE, II., 48), and found Him only "after three days" of grief and perplexity. Indeed this third sorrow of the Blessed Virgin was in some respects more grievous than the others, for in her other

afflictions Mary had the consolation of having her Divine Son with her. Thus when Simeon uttered that bitter prophecy in the temple, she could fold Him in her arms, and during the flight into Egypt she could press Him to her bosom. But in this third great sorrow He had gone away from her and remained away for three days, and she did not completely understand where nor why. It was only when she asked Him afterwards: "Son, why hast Thou done so to us? Behold Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing." (LUKE, II., 48), that He made answer: "How is it that you sought Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" Then He went home with them to Nazareth and "was subject to them" again, and "advanced in wisdom and age and grace with God and men."

And Mary remembered everything and foresaw everything, and treasured all these things in her grief-pierced heart. And so the years passed on, and every day she grew to love her Divine Child more and more, and every day she meditated upon the passion and death which were in store for Him, and suffered such piercing pain in her soul as no martyr has ever endured in his body. For even while she cared for Him day by day and surrounded Him with all a mother's love and tenderness, His future sufferings were continually before her mind,—those dark and gloomy hours which were waiting for Him at the close of His life,—those terrible scenes of His cruel passion,—the garden of Gethsemane, the whipping-post in the judgment-hall of Pilate, the dolorous way, the hill of Calvary, the cross, the tomb. And as the time of His death drew nearer and nearer, the sword of sorrow pierced the soul of His blessed Mother more and more deeply.

The fourth of our blessed Lady's seven dolours was the meeting with Jesus on the road to Calvary. There she saw Him Whom she loved, sprinkled with His Own Precious Blood after the scourging, blasphemed, spat upon, crowned with thorns, painfully dragging His heavy cross along the sorrowful road. And she was not allowed to soothe Him nor embrace Him, but could only follow sadly at a distance to the scene of His crucifixion.

Then on Mount Calvary itself, where her Divine Son died for men, Mary endured her fifth bitter sorrow. "There stood by the cross of Jesus His Mother," the Evangelist tells us. And standing there at the foot of the cross, she gazed up into the dear, familiar Face of her Divine Son,—the Son Whom she had adored and cared for from the first hours of His holy infancy until now,—the Son Whom she had presented in the temple, Whom she had carried into Egypt in her arms, Whom she had lost and found in Jerusalem. She saw Him suffering that ignominious punishment which was meted out to murderers and thieves. She saw Him in slow torture yielding up His Sacred life by inches, growing fainter and weaker moment after

moment, leaving her now at last, and dying. And even while she bowed to the Will of God and gave Him up without a murmur to His agonizing and shameful death, the sword of sorrow pierced her heart and chilled it with that awful grief which was the fifth and perhaps the greatest of her seven bitter woes.

The remaining two followed quickly afterwards: the first of them in that moment when she received His corpse into her arms, all bruised and mangled, from the cross: the other at the sad hour of burial when they placed His Body away in the sepulchre, and when she had to tear herself from even that lifeless Body, in order to return to her lonely home before the city-gates should be closed for the night.

These seven, chosen by the Church from the innumerable sorrows of Mary's holy life, are what we call the Seven Dolours, the seven great sorrows of our Divine Saviour's blessed Mother. To-day the Church is celebrating the Feast of the Seven Dolours. And the Church would have her children remember how black *they* are in the presence of Mary's immaculate purity, and yet how trivial and insignificant their little sufferings are when compared with hers. She invites us to meditate to-day upon the sorrows of Mary, and to learn this consoling lesson from them:

That whom God loveth, He chastiseth. That His Own dear Mother, whom He loves most of all His creatures, led a life upon this earth of bitter and almost continual sorrow. That His saints in nearly every instance were men and women of sorrow, men and women of disappointments and afflictions. That therefore we ordinary sinners should not be too anxious nor too greedy after earthly happiness, but should take such happiness thankfully when it is given, and do without it cheerfully when it is withheld. That when afflictions of whatever kind are sent to us, we should receive them, not rebelliously nor grumblingly, but rather as choice favours from the chastening Hand of God, which draw us closer to Him, purify our souls, wean them gradually from earthly things, and make them fitter for heaven. And that so surely as we bear our sorrows in this Christian spirit, they will be rewarded in heaven with everlasting joy.

XXXII. THE CROSS.

(GOOD FRIDAY.)

“‘And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself.’ Now this He said, signifying what death He should die”, (JOHN, XII., 32, 33).

OF course it is not for its own sake that the Church honours the cross, but on account of its connection with Christ. The cross is the symbol of our religion and the sign of our salvation, because it was the instrument which our Saviour chose for His passion and death. On the cross in shame and agony He spent the last three hours of His mortal life. On the cross He gave up the spirit, and all was consummated.

Therefore while the Church honours the cross and while we, her children, join with her in venerating this instrument of our redemption, in reality it is to our Divine Lord Himself that we are paying honour. The mother preserves a lock of her baby's hair, the son cherishes an heirloom of his dead father, the widow treasures and guards the picture of her departed husband; it is in something of this spirit that we love and honour the cross of Christ. We come to the altar-railing at the close of the services on this Good Friday night; we kneel and humbly kiss the feet of the image of our crucified Saviour. Love for Him Whom the image represents must prompt it, or else the kiss would be superstition instead of faith. It would be ignorance rather than religion, if our hearts did not feel grateful love for Him Who died for us.

It was to win our love that He died. It was to draw us to Himself that He chose the bitterest and most shameful of deaths. “‘And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself.’ Now this He said, signifying what death He should die.”

He did not need to die at all, but of His Own free will He chose to die. One drop of His precious blood, one tear from His divine eyes, one sob or groan from His sacred heart, would have saved our souls. But through boundless love for us, and in the hope of winning back our love in return, He freely laid down His very life. “No man taketh it away from Me,” He said, “but I lay it down of Myself: and I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again!” (JOHN, X., 18). Our love for Him, the love of even the least of us and the worst of us for Him,—that was the

the fruit which He hoped to gather; and that fruit, He knew well, would grow and ripen better through His death. "Amen, amen I say to you, unless the grain of wheat die falling into the ground, itself remaineth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life, shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world, keepeth it unto life eternal" (JOHN, XII., 24, 25).

He might at least have died an honoured and an easy death. But no; of His Own free will He chose the hardest death of all, a death of the slowest and most lingering, yet of the sharpest, torture, a death that was considered as disgraceful in His day as hanging is considered disgraceful in ours. What hanging and electrocution are now, the cross was then. The cross was the gallows of those times. Murderers and thieves and slaves were put to death upon the cross.

And the better to win our love He, the Lord and King of heaven and earth, He, the God of the boundless eternities, freely chose this hardest and most shameful of deaths. Certainly the shameful death He died for us should put us to shame for our shameful lives. Certainly if we had one spark of true manhood or true womanhood in us, we would rather die than be ungrateful or disobedient or unloving to Him.

It would seem as though He could not do enough for us. He was not content with having given Himself to us for all time under the appearance of bread in Holy Communion, as often as we little human insects will condescend to receive Him. He was not content with having prayed and wept for us in the garden of olives, falling upon His knees and then upon His face in agony till "His sweat became as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground", (LUKE, XXII., 44). when He looked forward to our time and to all times, and saw the millions of men and women whom He could not save because they would not let Him. He was not content with all the misery of the dreary darkness and the dreary dawn of that terrible Thursday night and Friday morning:—the stupid slothfulness of His Own apostles in the garden. He said to them: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death: stay you here and watch with Me", (MATT., XXVI., 38), and they fell asleep. He woke them up, complaining: "Could you not watch one hour with Me," and they fell asleep again. He awoke them a second time, and a third time they fell asleep, until He finally roused them with the gentle and sad rebuke "Sleep ye now and take your rest, behold the hour is at hand." He would sleep no more, until He slept the sleep of death.

It was not enough that for us He should be betrayed by the slimy kiss of a treacherous friend; that handcuffed or in chains He should be dragged about from place to place all through that Thursday night and Friday morn-

ing,—from the garden of olives to the houses of Annas and Caiphas, from Caiphas' house to the hall of Pilate, from the hall of Pilate to the inn or palace where Herod was staying, and thence, clothed by Herod's orders in the white frock of a clown, back again to Pilate's judgment-hall. It was not enough that in between these journeys the chief priests and their ruffian followers, Jerusalem's respectable men of that day, the Roman soldiers, and even the slaves of Pilate, should jeer at and make sport of Him; that they should strip Him of His Own garments and clothe Him with a castaway gown of royal purple; that they should seat Him on a stool for His throne, and press a crown of thorns upon His head, and a reed into His right hand for a sceptre, and kneel down before Him in mockery shouting, "Hail, King of the Jews!" It was not enough that they should bandage His eyes and then, when they smote Him, say "Prophecy unto us, O Christ, who is he that struck Thee?"; that they should strike Him over and over again with their open hands and with their clenched fists; that over and over again they should spit upon His sacred face; that finally He should be scourged like a slave at the public whipping-post in the courtyard of the governor's palace.

All this He bore without a murmur, to win our love. But all this was not enough. He freely chose of His Own deliberate and eternal choice to crown all this with the bitter and shameful death of the cross.

Through all that night of grief and torment He was looking forward to the cross, the bitter, shameful cross, the loved and longed for cross, that was to complete His Holy Passion. He kept saying to himself, as He had said to His disciples five days before, that when He should be lifted up from the earth upon the cross, that when He should be suspended there in shame and misery between heaven and earth, then He would draw all things to Himself, then the hearts of all mankind would be moved with love and gratitude towards Him. "'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself'. Now this He said, signifying what death He should die."

And His sacred words came true. He was lifted up from the earth, He was raised upon the cross, His Hands and Feet were pierced through by the nails. For three long hours He hung there suffering, from twelve at noon until three in the evening; and even then, when He died for us, it was probably not from any mortal wound nor even from loss of blood, so much as from a failing heart. His Sacred Heart was broken by love and grief and pity for mankind.

And being thus lifted up upon the cross, He has drawn all things to Himself. The hearts of all who are good and true and noble, the hearts of all men and women worthy of the name, are turning constantly throughout their lives, in love and in obedience also, towards that sacred, thorn-crowned, blood-stained Form, Which hangs upon the cross.

Since the crucifixion of our Divine Saviour hundreds of years have passed away. During all those centuries what throngs of saints and holy men, what multitudes of good practical Christians, have been guided in their lives of virtue less by fear of hell than by love for Jesus Crucified. How many have conquered their passions by thinking of His patient sufferings. How many have avoided impurity by remembering the burning love of that Sacred Heart which uncleanness would so cruelly insult. How many have been regular as the sun at the Sunday Mass and the Easter Communion in order to keep themselves in His Church and with Him. How many have overcome the temptation to drunkenness by being mindful of the sacred thirst which parched the lips and the throat of our Divine Lord as He hung upon the cross.

For He has been lifted up from the earth and He has drawn all hearts to Himself. And therefore we venerate the Cross of Christ, which was the bed of His suffering, and the altar of His sacrifice, and the throne of His triumph over the hearts of men.

Thousands, it is true, have failed to believe in Him. Ignorance has darkened their minds; they have had but little chance to learn about Him; prejudice and bigotry have turned them away from Him; pride has blinded their understandings against the light of His Gospel.

Thousands of others believe in Him, but will not give Him their hearts. They are insincere and fickle; they do not know their own mind; they are cold-blooded, unfeeling, incapable of either love or gratitude. They will not even avoid bad company to please our Saviour, nor stay away from places of temptation, nor attend with regularity at the Easter Communion and the Mass on Sunday. They know well that our Divine Lord died for their sake, and yet they will not overcome the smallest temptation for His Sake. To these the cross of Christ, instead of being their salvation and glory, is a snare and a stumbling-block.

But to the true Christian the cross, that sign of our holy religion, that emblem of brief suffering to be succeeded by eternal happiness and of short degradation to be followed by everlasting glory, is the symbol of all that is noble on earth and of all that is bright in heaven. The true Christian never signs himself with the sign of the cross but that he feels warm and sincere love for his crucified Lord. He never gazes upon the crucifix, in church or at home or suspended from the Beads which he carries with him, without experiencing a true sorrow for anything which he may have ever done to offend and wound that gentle Heart, and a firm purpose and resolve never to grievously offend Him any more but to strive to please Him forever and ever.

It is in this spirit that the true Christian looks upon the cross of Christ. It is thus that the Church considers it and in honouring it honours our Savi-

our Himself. She chants those words of the Apostle: "Far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world"; (GAL., VI., 14); and she would have us love the cross even as she loves it.

So this is the Lesson of the Cross: Love for Him Who hung upon it: some little love at least, in return for the overwhelming love which He has poured upon us: some little love for that great Heart of Christ, Which overflows with yearning and longing love for every human soul. It was for this that He lived and for this that He died, to win our love, to draw us to Himself. "'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself.'" Now this He said signifying what death He should die."

O let us help Him, each in his own weak way, to fulfil that promise, to make good that prophecy. Let us help Him to draw us to Himself. It may seem to us that we are beneath His notice, unfit for His glorious love, unworthy of Him. But He, Who is all-wise, thinks differently. He, Who is all-powerful, will make us worthy. We may be wretched sinners now, but if we let Him have His way, if we yield our hearts to Him, He can change us into saints. We may be poor, sordid dross, but He can turn us into purest gold.

We live in the midst of heartlessness, and yet we have hearts. We are not without affection, not entirely without gratitude. The slightest favour from our fellow-men makes us long to repay it. If some mere man had saved our life at the sacrifice of his own, we should never forget the wonderful love which he had borne to us, and which he had proved by dying for us.

But it is no mere man who has died for us. It is the King of Glory, the Lord of heaven and earth, the Man-God Jesus Christ. For us He descended down from the royalty of heaven. For us He was born of the Virgin Mary and lived His life of poverty and pain. For us He died in shame and agony upon the holy cross.

Therefore while honoring the cross, let us henceforth strive more earnestly than ever to yield our hearts to Him Who died for us upon it, to abandon those hearts to His eternal love by living the life which He wishes us to live. Such a life, for those who are in mortal sin, must always begin with a good and thorough confession. "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments," said the beloved disciple, St. John. "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments," said he who stood at the foot of the cross with Christ's blessed Mother (I. JOHN, V., 3).

And Christ Himself, Who sees all things and Who knows the secrets of hearts, will surely be pleased with our humble efforts. He will look down

with pity on our weaknesses; He will watch our temptations and struggles with tender compassion; He will smile divine approval upon our successes. And even as for our sake He was lifted up from the earth, so He will draw us to Himself, nearer and nearer through life and through death, closer and closer for time and for eternity!

May the blessing of His Passion and Death rest lovingly upon you, and enkindle your hearts, and better your lives, and bring your immortal souls to Him, for His honour and glory!

XXXIII. "WE SHALL ALL INDEED RISE AGAIN."

(EASTER SUNDAY).

"We shall all indeed rise again.-----

"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall rise again incorruptible. And we shall be changed.

"For this corruptible must put on incorruption; and this mortal must put on immortality.

"And when this mortal hath put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory" (I. COR., XV., 51, 54).

THE mystery of Christ's Resurrection is the chief foundation-stone of our religion. It was the door by which the old faith, that God had revealed chiefly through Moses, entered into the new and purer faith which He revealed through our Divine Lord.

The old religion was passing away. It had held sway over the Chosen People for two-thousand years. It had been betrayed by its own children, weakened and in a sense corrupted by the very hands that should have guarded it. One by one the prophets had been killed by its votaries; until finally the Lamb of God Who came to take away the sins of the world, was Himself slain on Mount Calvary in its name and by its priests. And now it was the third day since He had bowed His thorn-crowned head, hanging upon the cross, and had given up the spirit.

The day arose calm and bright. The earth was budding and blossoming-out with the new life of springtime. One of the fairest spots on the earth at that time was the city of Jerusalem; and just now it was crowded with strangers. Yesterday had been the Sabbath of the Passover, the greatest day of the Jewish year, a day as holy among the Hebrews as Easter and Christmas are with Christians. Thousands of exiles, driven abroad by cruel laws and conditions, had returned to their native land from every part of the world for this paschal week; as pilgrims they had come back to the Holy City from northern and northeastern Africa, from Greece and even from Italy, from Asia Minor and Persia and every other region where the Hebrew race was scattered, to observe these days of festival and follow out the ancient customs of their religion.

From morning to night the vast temple at Jerusalem and the courtyards about it were crowded with worshippers. All day long the white-robed priests were busy offering the blood of bulls and goats in sacrifice for the sins of the people,—little thinking perhaps that they had shed the blood of a greater Sacrifice upon the cross only one day before. And yet there was a sadness over all, strange and unusual in this time of religious joy; for in the temple itself a marvel had come to pass which had struck terror into the hearts of priests and people.

The Holy of Holies was the most sacred part of the temple. Nobody but the high-priest himself ever entered it. Even he might enter it but once each year, and then only for a few moments. Instead of wall or partition an immense veil of rich, heavy cloth, scarlet and purple, hung in front of the Holy of Holies, shutting it off from the gaze of the people.

And on that sorrowful Friday, at the very moment when He Whom they called "the enemy of the temple" had expired on Mount Calvary, this veil was torn mysteriously from top to bottom, leaving the Holy of Holies exposed to every eye, like a place which was sacred no longer.

It was a solemn sign of the great change that was coming; an announcement from God to mankind,—that the old religion, which He now ceased to sanction, was dead or dying; that the temple of Solomon with its Holy of Holies was no longer to be the center of God's worship; and that the law of Moses was to yield place now and forever hereafter to the doctrine and precepts of Jesus Christ.

And He meanwhile, the great Victim of Mount Calvary, the Teacher and the God of the new religion, was lying where loving hands had borne Him, in the sepulchre outside the city walls. On the evening of Friday they had taken the Sacred Body down from the cross; all through the Great Sabbath It had lain there in the tomb; and now it was Sunday morning.

It would seem indeed as if His enemies had gained the victory over Him at last. They had arrested Him; they had heaped their mockeries and insults of every conceivable kind upon His sacred Body and upon His sweet and loving soul; they had dragged Him to the court-room and obtained the verdict against Him and the sentence of the judge; they had put that sentence into execution with savage brutality, scourging Him, crowning Him with thorns, and nailing Him to the cross. With intense satisfaction and with triumphant hearts they had watched Him die upon it. And now that He was dead, what more had they to fear from Him?

His disciples were scattered, dispirited and heartbroken, hiding themselves in fear of their lives, while the chief-priests and pharisees on the other hand were rejoicing and congratulating one another on having brought about at last the downfall of their Enemy.

The apostles however and the holy women who used to attend upon Him, had not given up all hope. Even in those hours of desolation and sorrow they remembered certain mysterious promises which our Saviour had formerly made to them. Many times during the three years of His preaching our Lord had foretold to them that He would be slain, and that on the third day He would rise again from the dead. And although they had scarcely grasped His meaning at the times when He made this prophecy, yet now that one-half of it was already accomplished, they remembered it all.

There was one particular occasion when the Jews had asked Him for a sign. "He answered and said to them: 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' The Jews said: 'Six and forty years was this temple in building; and wilt thou raise it up in three days?' But He spoke of the temple of His Body" (JOHN, II., 19—12).

On another occasion when they pressed upon Him for a proof of His divine mission, He turned to them and said: "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh a sign; and a sign shall not be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. For as Jonas was in the whale's belly three days and three nights, so shall the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights" (MATT., XII., 39, 40).

And there were other instances where He predicted His death and resurrection still more plainly, especially to His apostles. Thus St. Matthew informs us that "when they abode together in Galilee, Jesus said to them: 'The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men, and they shall kill Him, and on the third day He shall rise again'" (MATT., XVII., 21, 22). And in other parts of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, as well as in the Gospels of the three other evangelists, this selfsame prophecy is again and again recorded.

It was the Will of our Divine Lord that His Resurrection should be the grand crowning proof of His Divinity, the great central fact upon which the whole Christian religion should be built up. And hence He foretold it again and again in words which everybody might understand. He prophesied it to His friends and to His enemies, that He should "be killed and the third day rise again" (LUKE, IX., 22).

And His enemies understood His meaning well. St. Matthew relates that "the chief priests and Pharisees came together to Pilate, saying: 'Sir, we have remembered that that seducer said while He was yet alive: "After three days I will rise again." Command therefore the sepulchre to be guarded until the third day: lest perhaps His disciples come and steal Him away, and say to the people: "He is risen from the dead;" and the last error shall be worse than the first.' Pilate said to them: 'You have a guard; go, guard it as

you know.' And they departing, made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone and setting guards" (MATT., XXVII., 62—66). They rolled into its place the large stone which formed the door of the sepulchre, and drew strong cords tightly across this stone, fastening the ends of the cords with mortar to the walls of the sepulchre on either side. Then when they had placed the seal of the Government upon the stone and the cords, and had stationed soldiers here and there about the tomb to prevent anyone from approaching it, they went away secure.

Every precaution had been taken. Everything which human power could do, had been done.

But there was a Power That they did not reckon with, a mightier Power than the power of man. There is a spiritual world which men do not see, and a God Whom men too often forget. And God had decreed the Resurrection, and in spite of every human effort to prevent it, it came to pass.

When the holy women drew near to the sepulchre on Sunday morning, they found it open and empty. An angel of the Lord had descended from heaven, "his countenance shining like lightning, his raiment white as snow," striking terror into the hearts of the dazzled soldiers at the tomb until they swooned away and "became as dead men." And when the angel rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulchre, the Crucified One came forth in the majesty and glory of His Resurrection.

The sacred Body had vanished from the sepulchre; but an angel was there instead to tell the holy women the joyful tidings: "He is not here, for He is risen as He said. Come and see the place where the Lord was laid. And going quickly, tell ye His disciples that He is risen."

Today, on the anniversary of that great morning, the Church once more proclaims to the whole world the Godhead of Christ. With joy and pride and love she tells her children, Christ's disciples, that Christ has arisen, as He said.

And therefore on Easter Sunday there is joy in the hearts of Christians, there is triumph in the great heart of the Church.

It is the day upon which the powers of heaven won their greatest victory over the powers of hell,—when Christianity began its conquest of the world,—when our Divine Lord triumphed over death.

He is the Founder and Head of the Church; we are its members. He is the kind, loving, sympathetic elder brother; we are the little ones. He is the Leader; we are His followers. As He fought against temptation, so must we struggle against it. As He suffered, so do we sometimes have to suffer. As He died, we must someday die. And as He rose again triumphant from the dead, so also shall we.

That was our text to-day, the words of St. Paul. the inspired words of Holy Scripture which no Christian is allowed to doubt: that, since Christ rose again after death, "we shall all indeed rise again:—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall rise again incorruptible."

The Resurrection of our Lord has many meanings for us. It means that Christ is God. It means the triumph of Christ over death and over all the blind forces of this material world. It means the triumph of Christ's Church sooner or later over all her enemies. It means the triumph of the truly Christian soul over the snares and temptations which Satan places in her way. But it carries with it no promise more beautiful or more consoling than this promise even for the body of immortality and everlasting life.

It is in our very nature to long for immortality and to expect it. It is so common to human nature, that there has been no nation, no people, which we know of, ancient or modern, barbarian or civilized, among whom the belief in a future life has not commonly prevailed. Men have experienced this longing for immortality from the very beginning, and have felt confident some way or other that He Who had planted it in their breasts, would not fail to satisfy it.

But never before had they such complete certainty as we have obtained through the revelation of Christianity and the Resurrection of our Divine Lord. Never before had they that certainty of faith, which assures us that even as Christ rose again from the dead, so "we shall all indeed rise again,—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall rise again incorruptible."

"And we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption; and this mortal must put on immortality."—"It is sown in corruption; it shall rise in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour; it shall rise in glory. It is sown in weakness; it shall rise in power" (I. COR., XV., 42, 43).

Our souls, freed from the darkness and ignorance which blind them here, purified from their sins and imperfections, shall dwell in eternal happiness, no more to suffer the sorrows which are so often their portion on earth, no more to meet the temptations which make their earth-lives a continual struggle. Our bodies at the last day shall rise to meet their souls, in the prime of strength and beauty, "immortal and unchangeable," never again to weaken nor grow aged nor die. For "when this mortal hath put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory." And soul and body,—the entire man,—the entire woman,—shall live a golden life, compared with which our earth-life is low and grovelling,—a life of peace and joy and fullest contentment in the Bosom of God.

O mysterious, noble, wondrous destiny, made clear to us by Christ's Own words, made sure to us by Christ's Own Resurrection!

With such a destiny before us, we may well say in the language of the Apostle that the sufferings of this life "are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us" (ROM., VIII., 18). What are they, after all! Even if such sufferings should prove to be long and bitter, what would it matter?

We would suffer willingly for one day, in order to be happy for a year. We would gladly work hard for a whole year, in order to gain happiness for a lifetime. And by the grace of God we will strain every nerve, watching ourselves against temptation and praying for God's help every day of our lives, in order to secure the happiness of an unending eternity.

It may take a great deal of pains and trouble to correct our faults. It may seem like tearing one's heart out to change our way of life. It may require no child's-play, but hard, earnest, persevering work to keep ourselves on the narrow path of duty. But after all, what does it amount to? If it were one-hundred years of constant torture, what would it amount to, when we think of the eternal happiness that shall repay us for it,—the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting!

And so, if anything has stirred us during this holy season of Lent,—if we have been touched and moved by the Lenten sermons, the weekly Stations of the Way of the Cross, the solemn ceremonies of Holy Week,—if God has given us light to see faults in ourselves which we never saw before, and strength to make resolutions which formerly we could never bring ourselves to make,—we will cherish that self-knowledge and keep those resolutions, hoping in the infinite Mercy of God, trusting in Christ, Who died for us, and Who for us too rose again from the dead: that even though it be through prayer and watching, "toil and trouble," that even though it be by His Passion and Death,—we may be brought at length to the glory of His Resurrection!

XXXIV. THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY.

(EASTER).

THE Resurrection of our Divine Saviour from the dead is the model of our own future resurrection, of the resurrection of our bodies which will take place at the end of the world on the day of general judgment. He Who arose glorious from the tomb on Easter Sunday, will be our Judge at that final reckoning. "Wonder not at this," He tells; us "for the hour cometh where in all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And they that have done good things, shall come forth unto the resurrection of life; but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment" (John, V., 28, 29).

Purgatory will be ending at that time; only two states of being will remain, heaven and hell; there will be but two classes of persons, those who are saved and those who are lost.

The reprobate, who after resisting God's graces and yielding to temptation after temptation has died in mortal sin, will come forth from the tomb hideous and frightful. His soul was black with mortal sin even at the moment of death. Through all the time which it has spent in hell that soul has been growing fouler and more degraded. But foul as the lost soul is, the body of the reprobate which arises from the dead, shall be foul enough to keep it company. Thus in the sight of all men the unrepentant sinner shall be judged by the Just One Who died for him. And thus, body and soul joined once more together, even as he worked his filthy sins upon this earth, even so he shall pass into the everlasting fire.

That will be the resurrection of the evil. But the resurrection of the blessed will be quite different from this. From heaven and from the closing gates of purgatory those happy souls shall throng to meet the bodies and be reunited with them. Not a mark of the fire shall be on them, not a stain of even venial sin shall remain after the cleansing action of those purifying flames. And worthy of such souls, the bodies of the blessed shall arise from the graves, brighter than the sun, immortal and glorified. It is beyond our power to imagine the splendour of those arisen bodies. St. Vincent Ferrer thought that if God were to place in the heavens even one of those glorified bodies, this alone would shed a brighter light than the mid-day sun. What a brilliant day that will be then, that day of resurrection and of judgment, when the bodies of all the just will partake in the Resurrection of our Saviour, will arise resplendent from the grave, beaming with the friendship and love, with the light and the glory of God.

No doctrine is more certain than this doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. Every day, when we say the Creed, we profess our belief in it: "I believe in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting." Nothing is surer than that we shall die; but in the light of our Saviour's teachings the resurrection of the dead is as certain as death itself. St. Paul makes our resurrection just as sure as the Resurrection of Christ: "Knowing," he says, "that He Who raised up Jesus, will raise up us also with Jesus" (II. COR., IV., 15). Think upon those words: Our bodies must arise because, according to the Apostle, they are members of Christ Who is our Head, and it is not fitting that the limbs or members should be separated from the head. Wherever the head goes, there the limbs go with it. It is reasonable that the Head should enter first into glory, but it is only reasonable also that the members should enter into glory after it. And hence we have the sure hope that as Christ rose again from the dead, so "we shall all indeed rise again, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall rise again incorruptible" (I. COR., XV., 52).

Members of the Church, the mystical Body of Christ, we have among us what the Church calls the "pledge of eternal life," the Holy Communion. That Body of our Saviour Which arose on Easter Sunday victorious over death, that same glorified Body under the appearance of bread we receive upon our tongues and take into our bosoms. And if during the thirty-three years of His mortal life His very touch raised up the dead, shall He not raise us up who partake daily of this sacrament of His Body and Blood? He Himself assures us in those comforting words of His which are recorded in the Gospel of St. John: "He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up in the last day" (JOHN, VI., 55).

Consider finally the great consolations which are imparted to us by a firm hope in our future resurrection;—consolations in which the wicked have no share, because their resurrection will be a "resurrection of judgment;" but to which the just have every right and title. "Then tears shall be changed into joy, pains into delights, poverty into abundance, confusion into glory, death into everlasting life."

Such was the consolation of the martyrs, who for the sake of God and religion willingly gave their bodies to torture and death, knowing that God would restore them those bodies on the last day. This hope consoled those seven brothers of the Old Testament whose martyrdom is narrated in the Books of Machabees. To the cruel king, who was torturing them, one of them cried out with his dying breath: "Thou indeed, O most wicked man, destroyest us out of this present life: but the King of the world will raise us up who die for His laws, in the resurrection of eternal life" (II. MACH., VII., 9). And

another exclaimed with confidence: "These (limbs of mine) I have from heaven; but for the laws of God I now despise them, because I hope to receive them again from Him."

This hope was also the consolation of holy Job amidst his sufferings. Formerly he had been rich and prosperous, honoured and beloved. But now he was poverty-stricken, deprived of health, of home and children, his body covered with a loathsome sore, dying apparently upon a dunghill. And yet he was happy and resigned to God's Will, for the hope of the future resurrection burned bright in his heart. "I know that my Redeemer liveth," he said, "and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth. And I shall be clothed again with my skin and in my flesh I shall see my God" (JOB, XIX., 25, 26).

This is the hope of all faithful believers, of all true Christians. Let it be always in our bosoms also, encouraging us to be true to the last, strengthening us to persevere in God's friendship through trial and temptation, through weal and woe, even to a happy death and a glorious resurrection.

XXXV. SHEPHERD AND SHEEP.

JOHN, X., 11—16.

(II. SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.)

OUR Divine Saviour compares Himself to the good shepherd who guards his sheep from the wolves even at the expense of his own life.

In our country dangerous wild animals are almost unknown; even in those western and south-western states beyond the Mississippi where there are so many millions of cattle and sheep at pasture, the cowboys and shepherds never have to lay down their lives for their herds and flocks. But in some other parts of the world the case is different. In India for example even at the present day wolves are still numerous, and a tiger will sometimes spring into the sheepfold; so that the Indian shepherd has to guard his sheep at the risk of his own life. And it was so in the country where our Divine Lord passed the years of His mortal existence. In certain parts of the Holy Land there were many wild beasts on the hills and in the wildernesses. Wolves and bears and even lions prowled about the flocks watching for a chance to carry off the sheep and devour them. In the Old Testament in the first Book of Kings we may read about that mighty hunter and warrior who afterwards became the royal prophet, King David. In mere youth he told Saul how he had killed with his own hands a lion and a bear which carried off sheep from the flocks which he was guarding for his father. "I pursued after them," he said, "and struck them and delivered '(the ram) out of their mouth; and they rose up against me, and I caught them by the throat, and I strangled and killed them'" (I. KINGS, XVII., 34, 35). In the Holy Land then the calling of a shepherd was not only a place of more or less trust and responsibility, but also a post of difficulty and danger.

Hence shepherds are spoken of often and honourably in the Sacred Scriptures. Not only King David, but also Abel, Jacob, and even Moses, the Leader of the Chosen People, were shepherds at one time or other in their lives. And since these great types of Christ had been shepherds, it is not surprising that Christ Himself should be compared to a shepherd, and not only in His Own words, as we have read in today's gospel, but also in the words of the various prophets who foretold His coming.

Eight-hundred years before His Birth the prophet Isaiah spoke these words about Him: "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd, He shall gather together

the lambs with His arm, and He Himself shall carry them that are with young" (ISAÏ., XL., 11). "All we, like sheep have gone astray," said the same great prophet; "every one hath turned aside into his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (ISAÏ., LIII., 6). Two-hundred years later on, and still six centuries before the Birth of Christ, God spoke these words through the prophet Jeremiah: "My people hath been a lost flock; their shepherds have caused them to go astray, and have made them wander in the mountains; they have gone from mountain to hill; they have forgotten their resting-place" (JER., L., 6). "I will gather together the remnant of My flock out of all the lands into which I have cast them forth" (JER., XXIII. 3). And we read in the great Ezechiel, who prophesied about that same time: "Thus sayeth the Lord God: Woe to the shepherds of Israel, that fed themselves: should not the flocks be fed by the shepherds? You ate the milk, and you clothed yourselves with the wool-----; but My flock you did not feed. The weak you have not strengthened, and that which was sick you have not healed; that which was broken you have not bound up, and that which was driven away you have not brought again, neither have you sought that which was lost; but you ruled over them with rigor and with a high hand. And My sheep were scattered, because there was no shepherd: and they became the prey of all the beasts of the field.-----For My shepherds did not seek after My flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not My flocks. Therefore-----behold, *I Myself will seek My sheep and will visit them.* As the shepherd visiteth his flock in the day when he shall be in the midst of his sheep that were scattered, so will I visit My sheep, and will deliver them out of all the places where they had been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the peoples, and will gather them out of the countries, and will bring them to their own land: and I will feed them in the mountains of Isreal, by the rivers, and in all the habitations of the land. I will feed them in the most fruitful pastures, and their pastures shall be in the high mountains of Israel: there shall they rest on the green grass.-----I will feed My sheep: and I will cause them to lie down, sayeth the Lord God. I will seek that which was lost: and that which was driven away I will bring again: and I will bind up that which was broken: and I will strengthen that which was weak, and that which was-----strong I will preserve" (EZECH. XXXIV., 2—16). "And you, My flocks, the flocks of My pasture, are men: and I (the Shepherd) am the Lord your God" (EZECH., XXXIV., 31).

At length in the fullness of time the prophecies were fulfilled. In order to visit His human creatures and dwell among them,—in order to gather together and feed the sheep who were without a shepherd,—God descended from heaven,

was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born in Bethlehem of the Virgin Mary. And when the Good Shepherd was born on that holy Christmas midnight, it was to brave and humble shepherds that His Birth was first announced; it was shepherds who first visited the manger and beheld Him lying there. "She brought forth her first-born Son, and wrapped Him up in swaddling-clothes, and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for Them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds watching, and keeping the night-watches over their flock. And behold an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the brightness of God shone round about them; and they feared with a great fear. And the angel said to them: "Fear not; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people: For this day is born to you a Saviour Who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David". (LUKE, II., 7—11).

Thus finally, after the long centuries of prophecy and waiting and eager expectation, came "the great Shepherd of the sheep, our Lord Jesus Christ" (HEBR., XIII., 20). He found mankind without a teacher or with false teachers, wandering blindly about in the darkness of idolatry and error; and "He had compassion on them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd." (MARK, VI., 34).

Even with the Chosen People at that time superstition was more plentiful than faith, and bigotry and intolerance and uncharitableness of every kind were more abundant than true religion. Even among the Chosen People there were prophets no longer nor true teachers of Israel when our Divine Lord came down amongst them. They were without worthy guidance, and their leaders, far from being true shepherds, were hirelings and thieves. "The thief cometh not but to steal and to kill and to destroy," said our Divine Lord; "I am come that they may have life and may have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep. But the hireling and he that is not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming and leaveth the sheep, and flieth; and the wolf catcheth and scattereth the sheep. And the hireling flieth because he is a hireling and he hath no care for the sheep."

Thus our Divine Saviour compares Himself to a shepherd and us to His sheep, to explain His great love and care for us. He indicates three principal marks which prove His right to that title of the Good Shepherd: "I know Mine; and Mine know Me; and I lay down My life for My sheep."

The Good Shepherd must know His sheep, otherwise how can He guide them and feed them? Otherwise how would He miss those that have strayed from the flock and are lost; and "leave the ninety-nine in the desert, and go after that which was lost until He find it, and when He hath found it lay it upon

His shoulders rejoicing"? (LUKE, XV., 4, 5). The Good Shepherd must know His sheep, otherwise how can He bring those into the fold who do not yet belong to it, as He has promised that He will do? "And other sheep I have that are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one fold and one Shepherd" (JOHN, X., 16). He must know His sheep, otherwise how can He separate His Own from those which do not belong to Him, as He will separate them at the end of the world:

"When the Son of Man shall come in His majesty, and all the angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His majesty. And all nations shall be gathered together before Him, and He shall separate them one from another as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats. And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on His left" (MATT., XXV., 31—33).

As He will know His Own on that last dreadful judgment-day, so He knows them now. Even as the shepherd knows his sheep, so our Divine Lord knows all His children whom He has made and redeemed. Other people know us on the outside only, but He knows us as well within as without. There is not "any creature invisible in His sight, but all things are naked and open to His eyes" (HEBR., IV., 13.). He beholds our hearts and souls as plainly as He beholds our faces. He sees our inmost thoughts as clearly as He sees our outward actions. All through our lives we move and breathe in His presence, and filled with interest and sympathy He watches us. He watches us in love and gratitude when we are doing right, but in sorrow and displeasure when we are doing wrong. Thus He understands us more thoroughly than we understand ourselves. As surely as nothing is hidden from God, so surely does the Good Shepherd know His sheep. He knows their temptations, and gives them the graces necessary to resist them; He knows every good point in their character as well as every weakness; He knows their virtues and the good actions and good habits for which He will reward them in a future life, as well as the open and the secret sins for which they will be punished. The Good Shepherd knows His sheep; and woe to that soul in which He sees nothing to love and approve, in which He finds no purity, no humility, no charity.

The second mark of the good shepherd which our Divine Saviour gives us, is contained in those other words: "Mine know Me." The sheep know their shepherd. He enters the sheep-fold, "and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he hath let out his own sheep, he goeth before them: and the sheep follow him, because they know his voice. But a stranger they follow not, but fly from him, because they know not the voice of strangers" (JOHN, X., 3—5).

The sheep know their shepherd. They know his form, his step, the sound of his voice, and they obey him and follow willingly wherever he leads them

When the shepherd stands up from the grass or from the rock where he has been sitting, the sheep raise their heads wondering now if it is time to be moving from the pastures to the fold. When he starts homewards, they go behind him with the fullest confidence and the most perfect obedience. And good Christians know our Saviour just as the sheep know their shepherd. They know Him, not as the nominal Catholic knows Him, with coldness and indifference and seeming contempt; not as the maudlin drunkard and the befouled libertine know Him, carelessly and stupidly; but as rational men in the full possession of their minds and faculties. They know Him to love Him and to show their love by doing their duty even when it is difficult; to obey His commandments and those of His Church as well, realizing the sense of what St. Augustine says, that no one "can have God for His father without having the Church for his mother;" and to follow Him where He leads them, into the everlasting pastures of His heavenly kingdom. It is thus that the sheep know their Shepherd. It is thus that our Lord can say of them: "Mine know Me."

Our Divine Saviour gives us the third mark of the good shepherd when he says: "I lay down My life for My sheep." "'Therefore doth the Father love Me'", He said, "'because I lay down My life,, that I may take it again. No man taketh it away from Me: but I lay it down of Myself: and I have power to lay it down: and I have power to take it up again'.-----A dissension rose again among the Jews for these words. And many of them said: 'He hath a devil and is mad: why hear you Him'? Others said: 'These are not the words of one that hath a devil: can a devil open the eyes of the blind'? And it was the feast of the dedication at Jerusalem: and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon's porch. The Jews therefore came round about Him, and said to Him: 'How long dost Thou hold our souls in suspense? If Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.' Jesus answered them: 'I speak to you, and you believe not: the works that I do in the Name of My Father, they give testimony of Me. But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice: and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them life everlasting; and they shall not perish forever, and no man shall pluck them out of My Hand.-----I and the Father are One.' The Jews then took up stones to stone Him. -----And He escaped out of their hands" (JOHN, X., 17—39), because the time for His passion and death had not yet come. But when that time came, then truly He "laid down His life for His sheep." He gave us this third mark of the good shepherd as well as the two others; and therefore fitly, and with fullest appropriateness and truth, He could speak those words of today's gospel: "I am the Good Shepherd;—and I know Mine, and Mine know Me;-----and I lay down My life for My sheep."

But the day was fast approaching when the Good Shepherd would be no

longer visible to His flock upon this earth; and knowing this well,—“knowing-----that He should pass out of this world to the Father,—having loved His Own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end” (JOHN, XIII., 1.); and therefore He appointed other shepherds to work under Him when He should be no longer on this earth, and to guide and feed His sheep until the end of time. Hence there is a Chief Pastor in Rome, and there are bishops and minor pastors in every region of the world. The very word “pastor” means “shepherd;” it was taken into the English language from the Latin long ago, and is the Latin word for “shepherd.”

One morning a short time after His resurrection Jesus appeared to seven of His apostles in one of their old familiar haunts on the shore of Lake Gennesareth. Peter was there and Thomas the Doubter and Nathanael and James and John and two others. There in the open air at the lake-shore their freshly-caught fish was broiled on hot coals and bread was broken. And after they had dined or breakfasted together, “Jesus saith to Simon Peter: ‘Simon son of John, lovest thou Me, more than these?’ He saith to Him: ‘Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee.’ He saith to him: ‘Feed My lambs’” (JOHN, XXI., 15.). The seven apostles themselves had just been given to eat by our Divine Saviour for when He appeared to them it was early morning and they had not broken their fast. Already at twilight on the night before they had been hungry; and they could not buy food, for when Judas had left them at the Last Supper to betray his Lord, he had taken with him all their money. He had not taken their fishing-boats however; and so on this evening before the appearance of our Lord at the lake shore St. Peter had said “I go a-fishing,” and the other six answered “We also come with thee.” All the night long they trailed their nets in the lake, and they caught nothing. But suddenly, when morning was breaking, being now hungrier than ever, they saw Jesus standing on the shore, and at the first instant they “knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus therefore said to them: ‘Children, have you any meat?’ They answered Him: ‘No.’ He saith to them: ‘Cast the net on the right side of the ship and you will find.’ They cast therefore; and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes” (JOHN, XXI., 4—6). Then St. John whispered to Peter: “It is the Lord.” And Peter, when he heard that it was the Lord, girt his coat about him,—it had been thrown off that he might work more freely at the nets,—and sprang into the water; but the other apostles came ashore in their boat. There they found “hot coals lying, and a fish laid thereon, and bread,” and Jesus (Who had prepared this food for them—perhaps by the ministry of angels—the Gospel does not say—perhaps in the dear old human way with His Own blessed Hands) saying to them: “Come and dine.” Thus it was only after our Lord had Himself “fed” these seven apostles, that He commanded Simon Peter in turn to feed His lambs.

So Jesus said to him a second time: "Simon son of John, lovest thou Me?" He saith to Him: "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee." He saith to him: "Feed My lambs."

And He said to him the third time: "Simon son of John, lovest thou Me?" And Peter, remembering to his shame how he had denied his Master thrice such a short time before, and fearing that our Lord doubted him, was humiliated and grieved because he said to Him the third time "Lovest thou Me?"; and he said to Him: "Lord, thou knowest all things: Thou knowest that I love Thee." He said to him: "Feed My sheep."

Let us notice in all these words and actions of the Good Shepherd the stupendous, indescribable, unimaginable love for us of the incarnate God. "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (JOHN, XV., 13.). Such love as this should compel even the most ungrateful to give back love in return. But when we remember Who it is That has so loved us,—He Who is so infinitely high above us, He Who is not merely man but God,—then there is absolutely nothing left for us but to spend our whole lives in love of Him. It is common, ordinary gratitude, which even brute animals sometimes seem to possess, but which men and women should display in a nobler degree.

For He loves us with all the warmth and fire of His Sacred Heart. He loved us "unto death, even unto the death of the cross" (PHIL., II., 8.). And unless we are utterly cold and heartless, we will love Him in return, will keep His commandments, will frequent His sacraments, will do everything which we possibly can, to show our love.

Certainly He, the Good Shepherd, has performed His part, and now it only remains for us, His sheep, to perform ours. If we shall do so, we well know what unspeakable happiness is waiting for us, what unimaginable glory shall crown us.

Gently and peacefully the Good Shepherd will guide us to His fold. He will walk before us to a happier destiny and a nobler existence. He will lead us in His Own good time from these dusty highways of earth to the bright, green fields of heaven,—from this barren valley of tears to those fertile and well-watered pastures where we shall rejoice with Him forever and ever.

XXXVI. THE LAST CONVERSATION.

JOHN, XVI., 5—13.

(IV. SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.)

THE gospel of today, as well as those of last Sunday and next Sunday, is an extract from our Divine Lord's farewell conversation with His apostles. It was after the Last Supper on the night before He suffered and died for us. He was taking leave of His apostles, and the parting was a sad one. They had given up all things to follow Him; and now He was going to leave them. It is no wonder that they were sad and disconsolate. He was sorrowful too, for the time of His passion and death was drawing near very fast. Yet He paid little heed to the sorrow in His Own Sacred Heart, but spent the few moments that were left in consoling His apostles. "You shall be made sorrowful," He told them, "but your sorrow shall be turned into joy" (JOHN, XVI., 20.); "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice; and your joy no man shall take from you" (22.).

It was a lengthy conversation, this talk that our Saviour had with His apostles on that last evening of His mortal life. It fills almost five chapters of the Gospel according to St. John. It was sad in parts and joyful in parts: sad when it dwelt upon their approaching separation, but joyful when it referred to their future meeting.

They had just finished the paschal feast. The Sacred Eucharist had been instituted, and the great time was approaching fast. Now that His remaining hours with them were so few, our Divine Saviour had told them more clearly what they would have to suffer for Him,—that they would be put out of the synagogues,—that whosoever killed them would think he was doing a service to God. He had not foretold these things so completely before; because He was yet with them, and He did not desire to dampen the joy which they felt in His companionship. But now that He was about to leave them,—these were His last moments; He would tell them all. And was it not customary when friends were parting, for them to ask one another many questions,—where they were going, when coming back, about their plans, their future movements? Were not the apostles His friends? And now that He was going back to Him That had sent Him why did, nobody ask Him: "Whither goest Thou?" Ah! They were brooding over their own coming troubles, which He had just foretold, instead of burning with love and sympathy for Him:

because He had spoken these things to them, sorrow had filled their hearts.

But comfort! "I say the truth," our Divine Saviour continued, "it is expedient to you that I go: for if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you" (JOHN, XVI., 7.). The Paraclete, the great Comforter, the Holy Ghost, Whom He would send to remain with His Church for all days, even unto the consummation of the world; the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, Who would finish the work which He had begun, Who would confirm and strengthen in them that piety and courage of which He had planted the seeds.

They were Christians already and children of God, but the Holy Ghost would make them soldiers of Jesus Christ, strong and perfect Christians. In Christ's Church, as well as in their individual souls, He would take up His dwelling-place; and He would remain in the Church forever, guiding it through all the ages so that it should never err, enduring in it until the very judgment-day, giving it life and light, as the human body receives its light and life from the soul that dwells therein. It is good for you that I go, for while I stay with you the Holy Ghost will not come to you, but when I go I will send Him to you.

"And when He is come, He will convince the world of sin, and of justice, and of judgment" (JOHN, XVI., 8). The apostles were too weak by themselves to prove to the world around them that it is living in sin and error. But when the Paraclete should come, Whom Christ would send, He would work in them and through them,—He would speak in their teaching and preaching and in the living voice of Christ's Church forever and ever, convincing the world of sin and of justice and of judgment:—of its own sin in refusing to believe in Christ;—of Christ's justice and righteousness which He had already made known by His miracles, teachings and perfect life, which He would manifest still more plainly by His death and resurrection:—of the final judgment at which this world shall be judged, even as this world in the person of Lucifer, its prince, is already judged,—the final judgment, which shall make straight the crooked ways, and even all things up, and reward the good, and punish the wicked, and consummate a perfect retribution.

"I have yet many things to say to you: but you cannot bear them now" (JOHN, XVI., 12.). They understood with difficulty what He had said already; why need He tell them more,—the many things which His apostles and His Church had yet to learn? No, He would let *Him* tell them, the Paraclete Whom He would send. "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will teach you all truth" (JOHN, XVI., 13.). He would open out to them little by little the secrets of Christ's teachings. He would brighten what is dark and clear up what is obscure. He would be with them and in Christ's

Church forever and ever, teaching through the Church's doctrines, defining dogma and explaining faith.

Yet they must not deceive themselves: it was no new revelation which the Holy Ghost would bring them. He came, not to reveal, but to explain. Abiding in Christ's mystical body, the Church, and working through it, giving light and strength to its Head and members, He would develop and interpret what Christ had revealed. And insomuch as He shall thus receive of Mine and show it to you, in that same degree He shall glorify Me (JOHN, XVI., 14.). "The Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, Whom the Father will send in My Name, He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you" (JOHN, XIV., 26.). "The Spirit of truth, Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, nor knoweth Him; but you shall know Him; because He shall abide with you and shall be in you" (JOHN, XIV., 17.).

Although it was the apostles alone who listened and took part in this discourse, yet we may consider many words of it as addressed to us and to all the members of the Church of Christ, as well as to the apostles. "Jesus knowing that His hour was come, that He should pass out of this world to the Father: having loved His Own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (JOHN, XIII., 1.). "I pray for them," He said to His Almighty Father: "I pray, not for the world, but for them whom Thou hast given Me: because they are Thine" (JOHN, XVII., 9). "And not for them only do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in Me; that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in Me and I in Thee; that they also may be one in Us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me" (JOHN, XVII., 20, 21). "A new commandment I give unto you: that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another" (JOHN, XIII., 34, 35).

"You call Me Master and Lord," He said, "and you say well, for so I am" (13.). "Little children, yet a little while I am with you" (33.). "A little while, and now you shall not see Me; and again a little while, and you shall see Me: because I go to the Father" (XVI., 16.). "I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you" (XIV., 18.). "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, do I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid" (27.). "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (15.). "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me. And he that loveth Me, shall be loved of My Father; and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him" (21.). "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the

vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for without Me you can do nothing" (XV., 4., 5.). "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you" (7.). "As the Father hath loved Me, I also have loved you. Abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love; as I also have kept My Father's commandments, and do abide in His love" (9., 10.). "This is My commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends: you are My friends, if you do the things that I command you" (12—14.). "These things I command you, that you love one another. If the world hate you know ye, that it hath hated Me before you. If you had been of the world, the world would love its own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore, the world hateth you. Remember My word that I said to you: 'The servant is not greater than his master.' If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you" (17—20.). "If I had not done among them the works that no other man hath done, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated both Me and My Father" (24.). "If I had not come, and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin" (22.). "Amen, amen I say to you, he that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth Me; and he that receiveth Me, receiveth Him That sent Me" (XIII., 20.). "Hitherto you have not asked anything in My Name. Ask and you shall receive; that your joy may be full" (XVI., 24.). "Because I go to the Father: and whatsoever you shall ask the Father in My Name, that will I do: that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (XIV., 13.). "Philip sayeth to Him: 'Lord show us the Father, and it is enough for us.' Jesus sayeth to him: 'Have I been so long a time with you, and have you not known Me? Philip, he that seeth Me, seeth the Father also. How sayest thou: 'Show us the Father?' Do you not believe, that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you, I speak not of Myself. But the Father, Who abideth in Me, He doth the works. Believe you not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? Otherwise believe for the very work's sake'" (XIV., 8—12.). "If you shall ask Me anything in My Name, that I will do" (14.). "Amen, amen I say to you, that you shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice; and you shall be made sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy" (XVI., 20.). "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice; and your joy no man shall take from you" (22.).

The promises which our Divine Lord made to His apostles, that they would be with Him forever and ever if they should do their part, are made also to us. The unspeakable and everlasting happiness of another life, which He held out to them as a reward for their faithful efforts during this life,

He holds out also to us. The directions He gave them for attaining to that everlasting happiness and securing His divine company for all eternity, are given to us also.

But if we fail to follow those directions, we will lose all. If "the labourer is worthy of his hire," surely the hire or the reward, on the other hand, is worthy of our labour. If we wish to gain heaven, we must labour for it and "work out our salvation." "For the wages of sin is death" (ROM., VI., 23.), but the wages of virtue and innocence is life everlasting. For our Divine Lord has "power over all flesh, that He may give eternal life" (JOHN, XVII., 2.). "Now this is eternal life: that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent" (3.). We must fulfil the strict conditions which have been placed for us; and then that eternal happiness which our Saviour so often promised to His apostles, shall be ours also.

"Let not your heart be troubled," He said. "You believe in God, believe also in Me" (XIV., 1.). That is the first condition for gaining heaven, a thorough, obedient faith: as we know God even by the light of reason, so to know Christ by the light of faith and revelation: to believe firmly in Christ and in His Church; for the two cannot be separated from each other, Christ being the Head of the Church and the Church being the body of Christ: to believe in every teaching of Christ and of His Church and to obey every commandment.

"Little children, yet a while little I am with you. You shall seek Me; and as I said to the Jews 'Whither I go you cannot come,' so I say to you now" (JOHN, XIII., 33.). "Simon Peter sayeth to Him: 'Lord, whither goest Thou?' Jesus answered: 'Whither I go, thou canst not follow Me now; but thou shalt follow hereafter.' Peter sayeth to Him: 'Why cannot I follow Thee now? I will lay down my life for Thee.' Jesus answered him: Wilt thou lay down thy life for Me? Amen, amen I say to thee, the cock shall not crow, till thou deny Me thrice" (JOHN, XIII., 36,—38). "I come forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again I leave the world, and I go to the Father" (XVI., 28.). "His disciples say to Him: 'Behold, now Thou speakest plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now we know that Thou knowest all things, and Thou needest not that any man should ask Thee. By this we believe that Thou camest forth from God.' Jesus answered them: 'Do you now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, and it is now come, that you shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me'" (29—32). "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace; in the world you shall have distress: but have confidence, I have overcome the world" (33.).

"Let not your heart be troubled," He said. "You believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house there are many mansions" (XIV., 1, 2). "And if I shall go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and I will take you to Myself; that where I am, you also may be. And whither I go, you know; and the way you know" (3, 4). But St. Thomas, doubting, said to Him: "'Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?' Jesus sayeth to him: 'I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No man cometh to the Father but by Me'" (5, 6).

Therefore there is only one path to heaven, only one road from this earthly life to our eternal rest in the Bosom of God,—and that is through Jesus Christ our Lord. It is only by imitating the life of our Saviour, by believing firmly in His teachings and obeying His commandments, that we can ever achieve the destinies for which God has formed us. It is not by worldly wisdom nor the knowledge and sciences of this world, it is not by earthly riches nor honours nor influence, —it is only through Christ and through the Church which He left behind Him on earth to do His work, that men can hope to save their souls,. And this He plainly told not only His apostles, but us, on the last night of His mortal life, when in that beautiful farewell conversation with His apostles He said: "I am the way, and the Truth, and the Life. No man cometh to the Father but by Me."

Not for St. Thomas alone, nor for the apostles alone, but for us and for all the members of His Church is our Saviour the Way and the Truth and the Life. If we do not see this way clearly and walk in it without ever swerving from it, it is only through our own fault; it is because we do not pray enough for the graces which we need, nor make a proper use of those graces which we have.

If there are some who have never begun to follow in this Way, if there are some who have not begun to render a thorough obedience to Christ and His Church,—even yet it is not too late. In the future at least, if we have not done so in the past, let us aim at the Christian life, with its avoidance of deliberate sin, above all mortal sin, and its practice of virtue.

It is not in one day, but only by repeated and life-long efforts, that we can hope to accomplish it. But when it is accomplished, then follows the exceeding great reward: an easy conscience, an untroubled soul; and finally, after years of peaceful life upon this earth, the blessed, joyful, holy hour of death,—when our Divine Saviour, Who bade farewell to His apostles and to earth so long ago, and Who went to prepare a place for them and for us in the eternal mansions of His Father,—shall come back again to each one of us in turn, and brighten the death-chamber, and smooth the dying pillow and take into the bosom of His mercy the poor departing soul; and so fold us to Himself forever and ever; that where He is, we also may be.

XXXVII.—PEACE.

JOHN, XIV., 23-31.

(PENTECOST SUNDAY.)

“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you”
(JOHN, XIV., 27.)

OUR Divine Saviour spoke those words on Holy Thursday. The following day He suffered and died, and on Sunday He arose from the dead. Forty days later He ascended into heaven. But just before His Ascension He commanded His apostles not to depart from Jerusalem but to remain in that city until He should send the Holy Ghost, Who “would teach them all things and bring all things to their minds whatsoever He had told them.” The apostles obeyed this command of their Divine Master and waited patiently in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Ghost. And finally, ten days after the Ascension, on Pentecost Sunday, the Holy Ghost descended upon them. It was only then that they fully experienced that perfect peace which our Divine Lord had promised them when He said: “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you.”

Even after His Ascension into heaven their hearts had been troubled and anxious. It is true that they were not so weak as they had formerly been; for they had beheld for forty days the arisen Body of our Lord, and had seen His Ascension into heaven, and were sure now beyond a doubt that He was the Son of God. And yet their hearts were not perfectly peaceful. With the unfriendly Jews filling the city all around them, they feared for their lives; and they were nervous and anxious, expecting the coming of the Holy Ghost every moment and longing for it.

On Whit-Sunday, “when the days of the Pentecost were accomplished, they were all together in one place: and suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them parted tongues, as it were, of fire; and it sat upon every one of them: and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak” (ACTS, II., 1-4.) This is substantially all that we know about that mysterious descent of the Holy Ghost which our Saviour had bidden them to wait for; but whatever it may have been in its outward appearances, it

wrought a wonderful change in the hearts of the apostles. It was their confirmation in faith and hope and in the love of God and neighbor. A moment before they had been anxious and fearful; but now that the Holy Ghost had entered their hearts, they were completely transformed.

They were no longer in fear for their lives, but considered their lives as of no importance when compared with the work which God had given them to do. They threw open the doors and went out bravely into the streets of the city; they went abroad into all the cities of the world, preaching Jesus Christ and Him Crucified to believers and infidels, to friends and enemies, with no thought of the consequences, and no fear in their hearts except the fear of God.

The apostles had been changed by that strange and mysterious descent of the Holy Ghost into strong and perfect Christians, soldiers and heroes of Jesus Christ. It had confirmed them in strength and courage, in the power of preaching and the power of working miracles, in Christian heroism and the firm resolve to suffer and die rather than deny their faith or commit grievous sin. Above all it had wrought a change in their hearts; so that in those hearts, where there was trouble and anxiety before, there was now only joy and peace.

"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you," our Saviour had said to them. When the Holy Ghost came down into their hearts, this perfect peace entered with Him, not to depart again, but to remain there ever afterwards, growing deeper and deeper the longer they were faithful to God's commands.

And even as the Holy Ghost remained forever in the hearts of Christ's apostles, so also He remains forever in the Church of Christ. He was sent, not to the apostles alone, but to the whole Church and all its members. And to all the members of the Church this peace of soul was also promised, this more than earthly peace which the world cannot give.

We all experience it at certain times. When you are leaving the confessional after making a good confession, that peace is in your heart. When you are saying your prayers without wilful distractions, you often feel it. You felt it in the innocent years of childhood when your souls, purified by baptism, had not yet been stained by actual sin. And so long as a person is guiltless of mortal sin and virtuous, so long as he tries to conquer his temptations and lead a Christian life, he will always possess this peace of God.

"Peace is the cheerfulness of mind," says St. Augustine, "the rest of the soul, the simplicity of the heart, the bond of love; it destroys enmities, ends war, bridles anger, keepeth down the haughty, loves the humble, unites those who are opposed to each other. He who possesses it, let him cling to it; he who hath lost it, let him strive to regain it."

No soul in the whole world can possess this peace which the world cannot give, except the Christian soul in the state of grace. It is impossible that there should be true peace in that soul which is stained by grievous sin. It is impossible that the peace of God should be in a soul from which the love of God has been taken.

And the moral to be drawn from these truths is this: If you wish to be at peace,—if you wish to be truly contented even in this life,—know that there is only one way of accomplishing it; and that is, by keeping your soul free from mortal sin. There is no other true happiness on earth. No happiness is either true or real or lasting that is founded entirely upon those riches of this world which can only accompany us as far as the grave. No happiness is real or lasting which is built up upon the fleeting and hollow pleasures of this life. But true and lasting and everlasting happiness is founded on the love of God and on obedience to His divine commandments. That happiness will remain with us in sickness as well as in health, in riches and in poverty, in prosperity and in crosses and trials; it will go with us to the grave itself and will accompany us even beyond the grave; for it is the peace of soul, which our Saviour promised to His followers, not for a time, but forever, when He said: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you."

Nothing can remove this Christian peace from our hearts, except mortal sin. Everything opposed to mortal sin, every virtuous thought, word and action will increase our peace of soul, even as it brings us nearer to God. "God is the Fountain of all peace," says St. Augustine. "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God, and our heart is restless and unquiet until it hath found repose in Thee."

It is in God therefore that we must seek for that peace which the world cannot give us. Let us pray today for peace of soul. Let us beg it from the Holy Ghost, the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, Who first brought this perfect peace to the disciples of our Saviour. It is Whit-Sunday, the very day on which He descended upon the apostles; and the whole Church of Christ is sending up to Him a special supplication and worship:

"Holy Spirit, Lord of Light!"

The Church sings to the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity in the Mass of today:

"Holy Spirit, Lord of light!
From Thy clear, celestial height
Thy pure, beaming radiance give!
Come, Thou Father of the poor!
Come with treasures which endure!
Come, Thou Light of all that live!"

Let us join our voices and our prayers with those of the universal Church, beseeching the Holy Spirit "to direct our feet into the way of peace" (LUKE, I., 79.) For "the fruit of the Spirit is charity, joy, *peace*, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continency, chastity" (GAL., V., 22-23.) Let us beseech Him today to grant us "the peace of God which surpasseth all understanding" (PHIL., IV., 7.);—to dwell in our hearts;—to fill them with light and strength and consolation;—so that by striving to do our duty and striving to live according to the precepts of our holy religion we may be at peace with ourselves, with the whole world, and with God.

XXXVIII.—THE HOLY TRINITY.

MATT., XXVIII., 18-20.

(TRINITY SUNDAY.)

“In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost” (MATT., XXVIII., 19.)

NO words are oftener pronounced by Christian lips than those just quoted. How many times have you yourselves in the course of your lives invoked that holy Name of the three Divine Persons. Each day at the beginning and close of your prayers, every night before falling asleep, every morning after awakening, you have signed yourself with the sign of the cross “In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.”

Now by whom was this oft-repeated form of words first used? It was by our Divine Saviour Himself, as it is narrated for us in the gospel of today's Mass. It was after His Resurrection from the dead, but before His Ascension into heaven, on some one of those forty marvellous days during which He so often appeared to His disciples. It was in Galilee, in the open air, upon a certain mountain, where Jesus had promised to manifest Himself and where the eleven apostles were gathered together to receive Him. “And Jesus coming spoke to them, saying: ‘All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth. Going therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost’” (MATT., XXVIII., 18, 19).

The Church of Christ has taken up those words of her Divine Master and has brought them down to us through all the centuries. Whatever the Church may do from morning until night, she does all things “in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.” Whether it be the Sacrifice of the Mass which she is celebrating or the sacraments which she is administering to her children; whether it is the divine office which she is daily reciting by the mouths of the priests, or the blessings which she gives, or those other prayers and ceremonies in which priests and people join;—nothing is done by the Church, nothing is attempted, without calling upon the name and invoking the protection of the three Divine Persons of the Blessed Trinity.

The priest begins the Holy Sacrifice “in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.” The infant newly born is brought to the church

and baptized" in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." When the child has advanced in years and is ready to be confirmed, it is with the invocation of the Holy Trinity that the bishop administers the sacrament of Confirmation: "I sign thee with the sign of the cross and confirm thee with the chrism of salvation in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." The sinner enters the confessional, and the spiritual judge who sits there, calls up his Christ-given power and forgives the sins confessed, "In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." The man and woman kneel together before the altar to be joined in holy Matrimony, and the priest does not bless their union without invoking the Divine Trinity. And when life is drawing towards its close, and the fatal illness has so far progressed as to bring its victim into serious danger of death, it is "in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost" that the priest begins to administer the sacrament of Extreme Unction. And finally in the death-chamber the Church, by the mouths of those who are at the bedside reading the Litany for the Dying, addresses the departing soul one last time: "Depart, O Christian soul, in the Name of God the Father Almighty Who created thee, in the Name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God, Who suffered for thee, in the Name of the Holy Ghost Who sanctified thee;" and the soul goes forth into her eternity strengthened and comforted by the invocation of that Holy Trinity, under Whose protection she is.

Thus the Church of Christ from the beginning of the year to the end of it, and from the beginning of her children's lives unto the end of them, does all things in the Name of the Divine Persons. And it is the desire of the Church that what she herself does in this particular, her children should also do. She desires that the last thing at night and the first thing in the morning they should make the sign of the cross, and thus fall asleep and reawaken "in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." It is her desire that they should invoke the Holy Trinity when sitting down to eat and again when arising from the table, to ask a blessing at the beginning of their meals and to give thanks at the end of them for the gifts which God has bestowed upon them. She would have her children begin their prayers and finish them "in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost," and commence every journey, every task, every undertaking and enterprise in that same spirit of steadfast trust in the Triune God and humble dependence upon Him.

And the Church in the name of her Divine Master promises a peaceful life and a happy death to each one who shall persevere in this spirit of faith and trust in the Holy Trinity. The life of such a one shall be filled with con-

solations; his death shall be free from darkness and despair. The last sad prayers shall seem unto him as a paean of victory; and even when his spirit is departing, even when affectionate eyes are brimming with tears around his deathbed, he himself will shed no tear, will feel no sorrow, but will rather rejoice to hear those supplications of the Litany: "For although he has sinned, yet he has still retained a true faith in Thee, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; he has had a zeal for Thy honour and faithfully adored Thee, his God. Remember not, O Lord, his sins and ignorances, but according to Thy great mercy be mindful of him in the eternal glory! Let the heavens be opened to him; let the angels rejoice with him!"

XXXIX.—THE BARK OF PETER.

LUKE, V., 1-11.

(IV. SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.)

THE Catholic Church has sometimes been called the Bark of Peter. St. Peter had been a fisherman before he followed our Divine Lord, and at his call to be an apostle, our Saviour Himself told him that henceforth he would fish for men. So it is natural for us to think of this great saint, the first of all the popes, as of a simple fisherman,—even though we know that long before the end of his life he left his little fishing-bark, to direct and steer that great ship which is called the Bark of Peter, the Catholic Church.

"Henceforth thou shalt fish for men," our Saviour said. We see the beauty of those words, and the beauty of the thought which they expressed. For what is this life of ours but a stormy sea, on whose troubled waters men and women are tossed to and fro, struggling for happiness and peace and salvation? And on this sea of human life is ever sailing the Bark of Peter, the great Church of Christ, safely avoiding each reef and shoal and danger, gallantly riding through storm and cloud, triumphing in spite of wind and wave, and bearing securely to their blessed destiny all who are willing to be taken aboard; while at the great ship's helm St. Peter stands, the Church's visible head, the fisher for men. Formerly he used to direct his little fishing-boat on the waters of the Lake of Gennesareth. But now our Saviour has made him chief of the apostles, saying to him "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build My Church;" and ever since that blessed moment he and his successors, the long line of two-hundred-and-sixty-two popes down to our own Pope Benedict the Fifteenth, have governed and guided the great Church of Christ.

Some of us have seen pictures of the Church under this poetical semblance of a ship with St. Peter at its helm. I cannot say whether there is any famous painting of the Bark of Peter, or whether any of the great painters has expressed the idea in colours; but certainly there are popular little prints and engravings of the subject.

And the ship in these pictures is crowded with souls whom it is bearing safely to their destination. It is sailing on troubled waters. All around it a stormy ocean stretches out in every direction, and a dark and cloudy sky is hanging over it. The big waves are covered with human beings struggling

for their lives. Some are swimming manfully towards the ship, in which lies their only safety and salvation. Others are being drawn into it out of the angry sea by strong and willing arms. Some are vainly struggling with the waves, wasting their strength, giving up in despair, and sinking.

The meaning and the symbolism of the picture scarcely need to be explained. The ship, of course, is the Catholic Church, the Bark of Peter, which is sailing across the dangerous, stormy ocean of the centuries. All the powers of this world are opposed to her, and beat upon her like the winds and waves, striving to retard her progress. Earthly wealth and pride and passions are her enemies. The governments, the kings and princes of the earth, are not her friends, but on the contrary, oftentimes are doing what they can to injure her and to weaken her influence. But thank God, they are unable to harm her. A greater power than theirs protects the Bark of Peter; and through all the storms of persecution and opposition she sails on triumphant. The successor of St. Peter, the infallible Bishop of Rome, is ever at her helm. And Christ Himself is with her, as He promised, to the end of the ages: "Behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world."

The men and women in the picture who are tossed about by the angry sea, represent the millions of human beings outside of the Church in the darkness and misery of error and unbelief. Some of them are battling bravely against the waves, making an honest endeavour to find the truth, that they may embrace it when found and live according to it. Some of them are sinking, giving up in despair, living a material life without belief in anything higher, and dying without hope. Others, a few only out of the many, are swimming swiftly towards the Bark of Peter, to be taken on board by willing arms, and to change themselves from their careless life of unbelief or if sin to the Christian life which God wishes them to lead. And these find safety and salvation at last in the bosom of the Church.

The Church has within her all that is required for the welfare and the happiness of mankind. It was for this very purpose that our Divine Saviour founded the Church,—to make men good and happy. But in order to reap the full benefit of belonging to her, we must live according to her teachings.

In one sense of the word, we all are Catholics, because we have all been baptized; but in another sense of the term, those only are Catholics who live a Catholic life. People who live in mortal sin, belong to the body of the Church without belonging to its soul: they are Catholics in name and little more. But those who live according to the teachings of the Church,—obeying the commandments, practising the virtues, frequenting the sacraments, keeping themselves in God's holy friendship free from mortal sin,—are Catholic not only in name, but also in reality. They are truly in the bosom of the Church and on the Bark of Peter; and even as she bears them gently over the stormy waters of this life, so she will land them safely in the happy port.

XL.—FOOLS.

MATT., V., 20-24.

(V. SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.)

THE meaning of the gospel is, that not only murder is a mortal sin, but also such terrible anger or hatred as would lead to murder. He who is "angry with his brother" to such a horrible extent that he would deliberately cherish the desire to kill him,—he who hates his neighbor so bitterly that he would deliberately pray or wish for death or any other grievous misfortune to fall upon him,—he who calls his brother "Raca" (that is, "good-for-nothing") or "fool" or other opprobrious names not simply in displeasure, but out of a heart filled with deadly and grievous anger or contempt or hatred for him,—all these according to our Divine Saviour are guilty of mortal sin and are "in danger of the judgment" and "of the council" and of "hell-fire." Of course He is not speaking of the word "fool" as it is used nowadays, but as it was used by the Hebrews of His time. To say "you little fool!" as people sometimes say it in our day in good-natured fun or even in venial anger, may not always be good form nor nice manners; but it is certainly no mortal sin. Whereas with those Hebrews of our Lord's times "fool" was a terrible word and commonly expressed about as much of hatred and contempt as one man or woman could possibly feel for another.

Yet even in those very times the word "fool", one of the most reproachful words which could be flung at a human being, was frequently applied in the Sacred Scriptures to every kind of sinners. And rightly too; because the worst fool is not the simpleton nor the idiot nor the madman in his padded cell, but the man or the woman who deliberately commits what he or she knows to be sin, especially mortal sin. "He that deviseth to do evils, shall be called a fool," says the Book of Proverbs (PROV., XXIV., 8).

Deliberate sinners are always "foolish and senseless" according to the Bible "They have sinned against Him and are none of His children in their filth.----- Is this the return thou makest to the Lord, O foolish and senseless people!" (DEUT., XXXII., 5., 6). "Hear, O foolish people and without understanding, who have eyes and see not, and ears and hear not, will you not then fear Me, saith the Lord: and will you not repent" (JER., V., 21, 22). "My foolish people have not known Me: they are foolish and senseless children; they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge" (JER., IV., 22).

First of all then, according to the Sacred Scriptures, those who practise no religion,—infidels, free-thinkers, scoffers and sneerers,—are prime fools. “The fool hath said in his heart, ‘There is no God’. They are corrupt and are become abominable in their ways.-----Their throat is an open sepulchre:---- the poison of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.-----Destruction and unhappiness in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known” (Ps., XIII., 1-3.). “They are inexcusable,” says St. Paul in his epistle to the Romans. “Because that when they knew God, they have not glorified Him as God, or given thanks; but became vain in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened. For professing themselves to be wise, they became fools” (ROM., I., 20-22.) “O Lord, how great are Thy works! Thy thoughts are exceeding deep. The senseless man shall not know: nor will the fool understand these things” (Ps., XCI., 5-7.).

Then those persons who are avaricious, or dishonest, are also fools of the first magnitude, according to Holy Writ: those who give themselves up to the inordinate desire for riches: those who in their hearts and souls rank money, wealth, and worldly prosperity one bit higher than Christian doctrine places them. The inspired St. Paul writes about men and women who are “corrupted in mind and who are destitute of the truth, supposing gain to be godliness” (I. TIM., VI., 5.). “But godliness with contentment *is* great gain,” he continues. “For we brought nothing into this world: and certainly we can carry nothing out. But having food and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content. For they that will become rich, fall into temptation and into the snare of the devil and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men into destruction and perdition. For the desire of money is the root of all evils; which some, coveting, have erred from the faith, and have entangled themselves in many sorrows. But thou, O man of God,” he goes on, “fly these things:-----Fight the good fight of faith: lay hold on eternal life.-----Charge the rich of this world not to be high-minded, nor to trust in the uncertainty of riches, but in the living God (Who giveth us abundantly all things to enjoy,) to do good, to be rich in good works, to give easily, to communicate to others, to lay up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the true life” (I. TIM., VI., 6-19). “The senseless and the fool shall perish together,” says King David in the forty-eighth psalm, “and they shall leave their riches to strangers” (Ps., XL., VIII., 11). “Be not thou afraid when a man shall be made rich and when the glory of his house shall be increased. For when he shall die, he shall take nothing away; nor shall his glory descend with him” (Ps., XLVIII., 17-18.). “As the partridge hath hatched eggs which she did not lay,” the prophet Jeremiah says, “so is he that hath gathered riches, and not honestly: in the midst

of his days he shall leave them, and in his latter end he shall be a fool" (JER., XVII., 11.). "What doth it avail a fool to have riches, seeing he cannot buy wisdom," says the Book of Proverbs (PROV., XVII., 16). "The prosperity of fools shall destroy them" (PROV., 1., 32.).

But if the avaricious and the dishonest are simpletons in the sense of Holy Writ, just as certainly fools are the lazy and improvident,—they who through their own deliberate fault fail in their strict duty of supporting themselves and maintaining their families. St. Paul said in one of his inspired epistles that "he who refuses to work, deserves not to eat" (II. THESS., III., 10.). And the Book of Ecclesiastes describes this particular type of fool in the following words: "The fool foldeth his hands together and (would) eat his own flesh (rather than work,) saying: 'Better is a handful with rest, than both hands full with labour and vexation of spirit'" (ECCLES., IV., 5., 6.).

One of the most foolish of fools, according to the Book of Proverbs, is the drunkard: "Wine is luxurious and drunkenness riotous: whosoever is delighted therewith, shall not be wise" (PROV., XX., 1.).

And still more foolish than the drunkard is the man or woman with an unclean heart: "Fornication and all uncleanness," says the Apostle in his disgust, "let it not so much as be named among you, as becometh saints: or obscenity or foolish talking or scurrility, which is to no purpose; but rather giving of thanks. For know you this and understand, that no fornicator or unclean person----- hath inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (EPHES., V., 3-5.).

All those who frequent bad company and who listen to bad advisers, are likewise fools: "Answer not a fool according to his folly," says the Book of Proverbs, "lest thou be made like him" (PROV., XXVI., 4.). "Fools hate them that flee from evil things. He that walketh with the wise, shall be wise: a friend of fools shall become like to them" (PROV., XIII., 19., 20.). "It is better to be rebuked by a wise man than to be deceived by the flattery of fools. For as the crackling of thorns burning under a pot, so is the laughter of a fool" (ECCLES., VII., 6., 7.).

"The prudent man doth all things with counsel; but he that is a fool, layeth open his folly" (PROV., XIII., 16.). It is one of the commonest habits of the scriptural fool to "sin with his lips." "The tongue of the wise adorneth knowledge, but the mouth of fools babbleth out folly" (PROV., XV., 2.). "Folly is joy to the fool" (PROV., XV., 21.). "The heart of the wise seeketh instruction, and the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness" (PROV., XV., 14.). "He that setteth bounds to his words is knowing and wise: and the man of understanding is of a precious spirit. Even a fool, if he will hold his peace, shall be counted wise; and if he close his lips, a man of understanding" (PROV., XVII., 27-28). "Eloquent words do not become a fool" (PROV., XVII., 7.).

"A cautious man concealeth knowledge; and the heart of fools publisheth folly" (PROV., XII., 23.).

These last words of the inspired Book describe very well, not only a great deal of our modern non-Catholic college and university teachings, but also a large part of our current literature. Much of our conversation, fully three-quarters of the newspaper-stuff which we read, and of the magazines, and of the novels and other books which are nowadays printed and sold, might fitly and appropriately bear this motto from Sacred Scripture that "the heart of fools publisheth folly."

"A fool uttereth all his mind," says the Book of Proverbs; "a wise man deferreth, and keepeth it till afterwards" (PROV., XXIX., 11.). "The words of the mouth of a wise man are grace; but the lips of a fool shall throw him down headlong. The beginning of his words is folly, and the end of his talk is a mischievous error. A fool multiplieth words" (PROV., X., 12-14). "The mouth of a fool is his destruction and his lips are the ruin of his soul" (PROV., XVIII., 7.). "The lips of a fool intermeddle with strife and his mouth provoketh quarrels" (PROV., XVIII., 6.).

"Be not quickly angry," says the inspired Book of Ecclesiastes, "for anger resteth in the bosom of a fool (ECCLES., VII., 10.). "A stone is heavy and sand weighty, but the anger of a fool is heavier than them both" (PROV., XXVII., 3.). "A fool immediately sheweth his anger" (PROV., XII., 16.).

Very conspicuous in the Holy Bible's catalogue of fools is the son who will not listen to his parent's instructions: "A fool laugheth at the instruction of his father," says the Book of Proverbs; "but he that regardeth reproofs, shall become prudent" (PROV., XV., 5.). "One reproof availeth more with a wise man than a hundred stripes with a fool" (PROV., XVII., 10.). "A fool is born to his own disgrace, and even his father shall not rejoice in a fool" (PROV., XVII., 21.). "A fool receiveth not the words of prudence, unless thou say those things that are in his (own) heart" (PROV., XVIII., 2.). "A wise son maketh his father glad" (PROV., X., 1.). "A foolish son is the anger of the father and the sorrow of the mother that bore him" (PROV., XVII., 25.). "Instruct thy son, and he shall refresh thee and shall give delight to thy soul" (PROV., XXIX., 17.). "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but the child that is left to his own will, bringeth his mother to shame" (PROV., XXIX., 15.).

And finally very prominent among those types of fools which the Sacred Scriptures give us, is the self-sufficient fool: "the person who is puffed up with pride and self-conceit; who puts all his trust in himself and thinks himself independent and sufficient; who will take no advice, nor ever give up his own notions nor depart from his own self-will; and who consequently can never improve nor repent, but must go on becoming a greater and greater sinner

and a bigger and bigger fool to the very end of his life. Listen to a few of the Scripture-texts which describe this unloveable character: "It is better to meet a bear robbed of her whelps than a fool trusting in his own folly" (PROV., XVII., 12.). "A wise man feareth and declineth from evil; the fool leapeth over and is confident" (PROV., XIV., 16.). "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; fools despise wisdom and instruction" (PROV., I., 7.). "Speak not in the ears of fools, because they will despise the instruction of thy speech" (PROV., XXIII., 9.). "Hast thou seen a man wise in his own conceit? There shall be more hope of a fool than of him" (PROV., XX., 12.). "He that trusteth in the Lord, shall be healed. He that trusteth in his own heart, is a fool" (PROV., XXVIII., 25, 26.). "The eyes of a wise man are in his head; the fool, walketh in darkness" (ECCLES., II., 14.). "Yea, and the fool, when he walketh in the way, whereas he himself is a fool, esteemeth all men fools" (ECCLES., X., 3.). "A whip for a horse, and a snaffle for an ass, and a rod for the back of fools" (PROV., XXVI., 3.). "Though thou shouldst bray a fool in the mortar,-----his folly would not be taken from him" (PROV., XXVII., 22.).

Last of all let me remind you of that short parable, which our Divine Saviour once spoke, concerning the fool who dies foolishly even as he has lived in foolishness,—the fool who is cut down unrepentant and shameless in the midst of his folly. It was on a certain day "when great multitudes stood about" our Saviour, so that, as St. Luke tells us, "they trod one upon another" (LUKE, XII., 1.). Now among these multitudes there were two brothers, who were quarreling with each other about the little money or land which their father had left them; and one of these two pushed his way through the crowds up to our Divine Lord, and said: "'Master, speak to my brother that he divide the inheritance with me.' But He said to him: 'Man, who hath appointed Me judge or divider over you?' And He said to them: 'Take heed and beware of all covetousness; for a man's life doth not consist in the abundance of things which he possesseth.' And He spoke a similitude to them,"—and here follows the parable of the fool who died in his foolishness:—"The land of a certain rich man," our Divine Saviour said, "brought forth plenty of fruits. And he thought within himself, saying: 'What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?' And he said: 'This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and will build greater ones; and into them will I gather all things that are grown to me, and my goods. And I will say to my soul: 'Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thy rest: eat: drink: make good cheer.'" But God said to him: 'Thou fool, this night is thy soul required of thee!' So is he (a fool)," our Divine Saviour concluded, "that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God" (LUKE, XII., 13-21.).

Such are the worst of all fools then according to the inspired Word of God, namely: the unbelieving, the avaricious, the intemperate, the unclean:—all who deliberately sin, above all mortally, in whatsoever way, and all who needlessly throw themselves into temptation. In some measure and to some extent we are all fools, even as we are all sinners. And therefore let us humbly confess to the Almighty Father, even as King David once confessed to Him: "O God, Thou knowest my foolishness, and my offences are not hidden from Thee!" (Ps., LXVIII., 6.). And let us earnestly pray Him to raise us up little by little out of our foolishness into the wisdom and light of His heavenly Kingdom.

XLI.—THE MIRACLE OF THE LOAVES AND FISHES.

MARK, VIII., 1-10.

(VI. SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.)

DURING the last years of His mortal life great crowds of people were sure to follow our Saviour wherever He went. His manner was so sweet and majestic, His words so touching, His miracles so wonderful, that people did not notice the time passing while they were in His company; neither did they remark how far away from home their love for Him was drawing them.

Thus on a certain evening our Divine Lord found Himself out in the wilderness, at a great distance from the nearest village, and around Him a vast multitude of about four-thousand people. Most of them had been following Him for three days now, and by this time many of them would be far from their homes. They were faint and tired and hungry after their long foot-journeying, and were not provided with the food which their bodies craved. In fact their minds were so completely wrapped up in our Lord's teachings and miracles, that the needs of their bodies had been forgotten.

And now when it was evening, the dinner-hour in that country, our Saviour noticed the people and pitied them. It was love for Him which had drawn them so far away from their homes; it was love for Him which had made them forget the needs of their bodies; and this being the case, even a heart less tender than the sacred Heart of Jesus would be moved with compassion.

So we read in the gospel that He beckoned His disciples to Him and said: "I have compassion on the multitude, for behold they have now been with Me three days, and have nothing to eat. And if I shall send them away fasting to their home, they will faint in the way; for some of them come from afar off."

He had "compassion on the multitude" for they had "nothing to eat." Here let us find the first lesson of today's gospel: namely, that our Saviour compassionates the multitude, that He pities even our own bodily wants and pains, and hence that we should bear up bravely under such evils. Whenever God allows us to suffer with bodily ills, we should take courage from this consoling thought, that our Divine Saviour sees all that befalls us, and watches, and pities. Therefore in heat and cold, in hunger and thirst, in weakness and fatigue, in poverty, in pains and sickness, let us strive to be cheerful and

resigned to God's Will. And that same kind God, Who imposes these bodily penances upon us, will relieve us in the midst of them and free us from them in His Own good time. Because He has "compassion on the multitude."

"I have compassion on the multitude," He said to His disciples, "for behold-----they have nothing to eat. And if I shall send them away fasting to their home, they will faint in the way." "And His disciples answered Him: 'From whence can anyone fill them with bread here in the wilderness?'"

The disciples showed their want of faith by this doubting answer, their lack of trust in His almighty power. There was but little excuse for them either, because they had been with our Saviour for a long time now, and had seen Him put forth His miraculous power in a variety of ways. Many a time had they beheld Him healing the sick and giving sight to the blind; they had seen Him calm the tempest and walk upon the waters of the lake. And as they had seen Him thus exercise His almighty power in the past, why should they doubt now but that that same divine power could work a miracle and feed this hungry multitude in the desert? Yet instead of showing perfect trust in His great power, they answered Him: "From whence can anyone fill them with bread here in the wilderness?"

Let us notice however that our Lord does not rebuke the disciples for their lack of faith in Him nor for their doubting answer. On the contrary He passes it over in silence and with divine compassion. Just as He pities the bodily wants, the weakness and hunger of the multitude, so He compassionates the spiritual wants of His disciples, their lack of faith and of confidence in Him.

And from this we may learn the second lesson of the gospel of today: namely, that even as our Saviour has compassion on our bodies, so He also compassionates our souls. He pities our bodily pains and afflictions, but still more does He pity our spiritual weaknesses and temptations.

Let us remember always that our Divine Lord's compassion for our souls is even greater than his compassion for our bodies, and take courage from this thought. If you have approached the sacraments with the sincere purpose of beginning a new life, and afterwards have had the misfortune to fall back into sin, remember that a merciful and compassionate Saviour is watching you with infinite pity; do not be afraid to draw near to Him once more by means of an humble confession and to make another attempt to live the life which pleases Him. Even though you be weighed down with the sins of years, do not give up heart; but turn to God with trust and confidence in His mercy and compassion, and He will help you to free yourself from your sins. And when you feel yourself weakening and are almost tempted to yield to some wicked suggestion, then in that crucial moment lift up your hearts to Him Who has "compassion on the multitude." In that hour of greatest danger,

when temptations grow most strong, and the soul seems feeble, and the will is weary of struggling, turn to the Sacred Heart which is overflowing with pity for you.

It is a great consolation for us to understand that there is One Who pities the afflictions of our bodies and the weaknesses of our souls. It is a still greater consolation for us to know that He Who pities us, is able to help us. And this is the third and last lesson which we are to learn from the gospel of today. We have seen already that our Divine Lord compassionates the wants of our bodies and that He compassionates the wants of our souls; now let us learn the final lesson, that He not only compassionates our bodily and spiritual afflictions, but has also the power to relieve us from both of them in His Own good time. He gave a splendid example of this divine power that evening in the wilderness on the shore of lake Gennesareth.

The vast multitude were there, hungry and weak after their three day's journeying. And our Saviour asked His disciples: "How many loaves have ye?" They said "Seven." "and taking the seven loaves, giving thanks, He broke them and gave them to His disciples to set before the people; and they set them before them. And they had a few little fishes; and He blessed them and commanded them to be set before them. And they did eat and were filled; and they took up that which was left of the fragments, seven baskets. And they that had eaten were four-thousand. And He sent them away."

Immediately this splendid miracle had a two-fold effect: at one and the same moment it relieved the bodily wants of the people and the spiritual wants of the disciples. Our Divine Lord compassionated the hunger of the multitude, and by multiplying the loaves and fishes He satisfied that hunger. Our Divine Lord pitied the lack of faith and the weakness of soul in His disciples, and by this new display of His infinite power He increased their faith, and strengthened their souls, and renewed their trust and confidence in Him.

Therefore let us learn this three-fold lesson from the gospel of today: first, that our Saviour pities even our bodily afflictions; secondly, that He feels even greater compassion for the weaknesses of our souls; and thirdly, that His is no idle nor useless pity, but that He has the power to relieve us from afflictions both of body and of soul whenever it is His Divine Will to do so.

For He is as near to us as He was to that multitude in the wilderness. We do not see Him with our bodily eyes, nor hear His voice, nor behold His wondrous miracles; but "I am with you all days," He said, "even to the consummation of the world;" and He is true to His promise. His divine eyes, overflowing with an infinite compassion, are constantly gazing at us. His strong right hand is always stretched out to help us. Whenever we do a good deed, whenever we overcome a temptation, every time that we say our prayers,

every time that we come into the Church, every time that we receive the sacraments worthily,—we touch that strong right hand, and it lifts us up one step nearer to heaven. He pities our bodily sufferings, He pities our spiritual infirmities, and He will relieve us from one-half of the burden if we will only do our share. So surely as we place our trust and confidence in Him Who has "compassion on the multitude," so surely He will bring us out of the storm into the sunshine, out of the darkness into the light, out of the sufferings and struggles of this life into the joy and peace which will be unspeakable and everlasting.

XLII.—FALSE PROPHETS.

MATT., VII., 15-21.

(VII. SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.)

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.”

WHO are the false prophets, whom our Lord tells us to beware of? Everyone who weakens his neighbor's faith or corrupts his neighbor's innocence either by loose words or by bad example, is one of these false prophets. Everyone who teaches or advises or encourages any practice against the laws of nature or against the laws of God, is a false prophet. All those persons who would draw you out of the bosom of the Roman Catholic Church or away from the practice of your holy religion, all heretical teachers and open unbelievers, all loud and vulgar doubters and scoffers, are false prophets. All the bad company of every kind, which you have to meet with in the course of your daily duties, whether at work or at school, and whose influence by word and example tends to lessen your faith or to demoralize your Christian character; all those persons who talk loosely on religious subjects, whether when they are joking or when they are serious, and who set up the silly doubts and the insignificant little opinions and guesses of their foolish minds against the great teachings of the Church and the Bible; all those persons who say that one religion is as good as another, who say that they doubt after all whether it is so hard to go to heaven as the priests would make it out to be; all those who scandalize little children and youth and who ridicule them into breaking their good habits and into beginning to do that which is wrong; all those who throw the weight of their bad example against the good resolutions of their fellow-men;—they are all false prophets. The merely nominal Catholic who never enters a church and is forgetting how to bless himself; the careless, shoddy Catholic who goes to Mass on Sunday just now and then whenever the notion strikes him; the stupid, ignorant, brainless Catholic who cannot get it into his limited understanding that to miss the Easter Communion is a shameful and disgraceful crime; the would-be Protestant Catholic who frequently “goes to meeting” with her non-Catholic acquaintances just to show them how “liberal” she is; the cowardly Catholic

who will not receive Communion as often as he or she would otherwise like to, for fear of being thought "pious" and of being criticized by his or her extremely smart friends; the weak-kneed, apostate Catholic who blushes for his religion and denies it just because he happens to work among a crowd of loud-mouthed, quarter-educated free-thinkers; the sleek villain who finds his amusement in corrupting innocence and destroying virtue; the unprincipled fop,—collars and cuffs and hair-oil,—virtue gone and health destroyed and manhood (or womanhood) fast going,—smooth as linen and sweet as candy on the outside, but within morally and even physically rotten; the people who hate children; the people who dread and abhor the large families which our Catholic races are so justly proud of; the disreputable hags and harridans who, after wrecking their own health and happiness by unnatural practices, teach and advise young married folk how to do likewise; the ruffian, male or female, who shows his or her companions the way to the dram-shop and the whiskey-bottle; the degraded father and mother who instruct their children in profanity and drunkenness rather than in the Christian virtues;—all unmanly men and unwomanly women; all the different types and classes of bad characters, who would persuade you by the words which they speak as well as by the lives which they lead that religion is neither necessary nor useful:—they are all false prophets. It is against all of these that the Church today warns us, and in the very words of her Divine Master bids us to guard ourselves: "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."

How shall we do her bidding? How shall we heed her warning?

There is no better way of guarding against false teachers than by following the true one. And the one true teacher upon this earth,—the only teacher upon this earth that even claims to be infallible,—is the Church of Christ, who speaks to us through her mouth-pieces, the Pope, bishops and priests.

So long as we follow this true guide simply and trustfully, we shall be safe from false prophets. They may come to us "in the clothing of sheep," but we will know that "inwardly they are ravening wolves," and we shall refuse to be influenced by them. They may attack our principles and our good habits with all the weight of their bad example; but we will decline to have any share in their besotting vices, or in their iniquitous lives, or in the hopeless and unending misery by which those guilty lives shall be punished hereafter. They may strive to weaken our faith and to wean us from our religious practices by mockery and ridicule, they may scoff and sneer at the Sunday Mass, the daily or frequent or weekly Communion, the Rosary, the Confessional; but we shall stand firm under all. "They are false prophets," we will say to ourselves; "their little opinions and notions are only of yesterday, vain,

deceitful and fleeting. But *we* follow the Church of our forefathers, the grand old Church, immortal and unchangeable, which has satisfied the greatest minds and the noblest hearts of nineteen-hundred years!"

Let us always follow this noble guide, and follow her in earnest. Let us obey her commandments and her counsels, for there is no other earthly teacher so fit to advise us. Let us drink deep and often from the sacraments, her fountains of grace, hope in her promises, believe in her teachings, and live up to our belief or try hard to. Thus we shall lead honest, useful lives, edifying to our fellow-Catholics around us; and even men of false religions and men of no religion at all will learn little by little to esteem the true Church, of which we are members and from which we draw our virtues and our strength.

So we will not be among the number of those fruitless, barren trees spoken of in today's gospel, which "shall be cut down and shall be cast into the fire"; but we will be green and fruitful vines in the Lord's vine yard, flourishing and happy since we are doing the Will of God. And we shall have before us at the end of this mortal life, ever growing brighter and brighter as we draw nearer to it, that promise of our Divine Saviour recorded in this same gospel: "He that doth the Will of My Father Who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven."

XLIII.—THE PARABLE OF GRAFT.

LUKE, XVI., 1-9.

(VIII. SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.)

OUR Divine Saviour spoke this parable to publicans and pharisees, who were avaricious and grasping for the riches of this world and had a sharp eye after money. The parable of graft, we might call it, because it shows how a shrewd but dishonest steward or agent, after his employer had discharged him and while he was still working his notice, made influence and friends for himself by cheating his master.

A certain rich man, our Saviour said, had a head-servant or steward in charge of all his property. Everyone knows that an agent of this kind in charge of a large estate, holds a position of great trust and responsibility; and this particular rich man trusted his agent fully; and when people came to him privately and told him that the steward was unfaithful to his interests and was wasting his property, even then he would not condemn him without first giving him a chance to defend himself. So he called his steward and said: "How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship." And it was only then, when the steward could not give a satisfactory account nor clear himself of the accusations against him, that the rich man discharged him from his service.

So our Divine Lord went on to say that when the unfaithful steward had thus lost his employment, he naturally was worried about it. When he should finish working out the short notice that had been allowed to him, he would be without a home and without a living; and of course he began to consider and to look about him. "What will I do now?" he questioned himself. He wasn't strong enough to work in the fields; and he didn't want to beg if he could possibly avoid it: "To dig I am not able; to beg I am ashamed." Then it occurred to him that perhaps his master's debtors, the men who had credit with his master and on this credit had been buying wheat and wine and olive-oil from his master's farms and vineyards, would give him a home and a living if he could only win their favour; and he might win their favour, he thought, by falsifying the accounts in such a way as to cut down their bills and save them a lot of money at his master's expense. When this dishonest scheme came into his head, the unfaithful steward was delighted with it and his course was decided on at once. "I know what I will do," he said. "I will make friends

of those very men who owe money to my master; and when I am discharged from here and homeless, they will receive me into their houses."

So he secretly called together his master's debtors,—because it seems that he was still in charge of the accounts while serving his notice;—and when they had assembled, the steward spoke privately to them one after another. "How much dost thou owe my lord,?" he asked the first one. When the debtor had produced his bill and had answered "A hundred barrels of oil," "Destroy that bill," the steward said, "and write out a new bill for fifty barrels, and nobody but you and I will be the wiser of it." Thus he made a friend of this debtor by cheating his master out of one-half his debt. Then he turned to the second: "And how much dost thou owe my master?" One-hundred quarters of wheat," he replied. "Cross out the one-hundred and write eighty," said the unfaithful steward. And so, one after another, he continued making friends of his master's debtors. And when the rich man long afterwards heard all about it, of course he condemned and despised the steward's dishonesty; but at the same time he had to wonder at the cunning and sharpness of the trick he had played upon him.

Here the parable ends, and our Divine Saviour goes on to draw the moral from it. "Truly," He says, "the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light;" and that is the drift of the parable. Often-times the children of this world are shrewder and more acute, more persevering and industrious, in toiling for their little worldly ends, than the children of light are in working out their eternal salvation.

Look at the children of this world. How wide open their eyes always are to everything which concerns their worldly welfare! How watchful and alert they are in advancing their worldly interests! Look at the fortune-building millionaire scheming and planning day and night how to cling to and how to increase his millions; look at the professional politician always manoeuvring and playing on the wires of politics to win his party-victories and gain a good easy living for himself from doing so; look at the so-called society-people planning and following out from year-end to year-end their little rounds of useless pleasures. Ordinarily and on the average you won't admire very much either the millionaire or the professional politician or the "society-leader;" you won't grow very enthusiastic about the paltry little ends which these little people are working for; but sometimes you will admire the cleverness and wisdom, the zeal and industry, with which they pursue those ends.

And then glance away from these children of this world and look at the children of light. Are they as wise and zealous in regard to their more important and more lasting ends, the glory of God, for example, the salvation of their souls, the solid and lasting and ever-lasting welfare of their fellow men and women?

Who are the children of light? Christians, of course. Christians are the children of light. We, to whom God has granted His revelations,—we, whom Christ Himself has taught and is still teaching through His Church,—we are surely in some sense the children of light. Are we as prudent and cautious, as cunning and jealously careful of our souls' interests as worldly people are of their temporal affairs?

The man who would offer poison to one of those children of this world, would receive a blow in return; but in too many cases we take the spiritual poison that is given us in bad advice and scandalous conversation, in irreligious books, and trashy magazines, and sensational daily and Sunday papers, and we swallow it with thanks. There is no merchant in our cities so completely brainless that he will give gold for dross; but how many are the so-called Catholics who are daily yielding up the priceless gold of unselfish virtue and a clear conscience for the worse than dross of guilty habits.

So when we compare worldly people with Christians,—when we see how shrewdly the people of this world guard their worldly interests, how zealous they are in pursuing pleasure, how diligent in making money,—and then turning back to ourselves, see how lazy and lukewarm and almost indifferent we sometimes are about the everlasting affairs of our souls,—we begin to realize the deep sense and wisdom of our Divine Saviour's words. "Truly the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light."

One other short moral our Saviour draws from this parable of the unfaithful steward: Make friends for yourselves out of the mammon of iniquity. Even as the unfaithful steward made friends of his master's debtors, so our Saviour would have us make friends to ourselves out of our earthly riches,—friends who will help us towards heaven by praying for us and who will receive us there when we die: "And I say to you: Make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity, that when you shall fail, they may receive you into everlasting dwellings."

Take these very earthly riches, which Christ calls "the mammon of iniquity," which ruin so many souls, which harden so many hearts against God's grace and blind so many minds against the luster of His truth and the depths of His mercy;—take these very earthly riches, and out of them make friends for yourselves and powerful intercessors before the throne of God. Is it possible to do this? Yes, possible and very easy; easier far than was the sinful task of that unfaithful steward.

For when we give alms to the poor, oftentimes we change them from strangers into warm and grateful friends, who will pray until the very end that heaven may be ours; and who, if they die before we die, will gladly receive us there "into everlasting dwellings." And when we are generous in our offerings to the

Church and to charitable purposes, we make friends of the angels and saints of God, who will tenderly watch us during our earthly pilgrimage, and constantly intercede for us from the heights of heaven, and royally welcome us when we reach that happy abode.

Let us strive then to profit from this two-fold lesson of today's gospel. Certainly it was for our profit that our Divine Lord told the parable and drew its morals. Let us ask Him today to teach us these two lessons, to grant us these two favours: first, that by fulfilling well our duties and bravely conquering our temptations we may show ourselves at least as wise and prudent in the great work of saving our souls as we are in the vastly smaller and less important work of providing for our bodies; and secondly, that by true unselfishness and warm generosity towards every worthy object we may make unto us out of the very mammon of iniquity powerful friends before the heavenly throne.

Thus the great Creator, Who continually brings good out of evil, will help us this day to draw good and lasting profit from the evil example of the unfaithful steward; and even as the worldly wisdom of that dishonest servant's actions won the admiration of his earthly master, so the unworldly and Christian wisdom of our future lives will merit the eternal approval of our Father in heaven.

XLIV.—THE FALL OF JERUSALEM.

LUKE, XIX., 41—47.

(IX. SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.)

THE walled city of Jerusalem at the time of our Saviour was one of the strongest and proudest and most beautiful of cities. But it had incurred and had richly deserved the anger and the curse of God.

For hundreds of years God had been pouring His most special favours and His miracles of kindness upon it, and for hundreds of years it had been repaying God's goodness with the basest ingratitude. Its people were blinded to everything except the things of this world,—blinded by the love of riches and the love of excessive feasting and drinking and the love of sinful pleasures. Therefore instead of welcoming our Saviour, the city of Jerusalem had scorned and rejected Him. Even as in former ages it had persecuted and slain the prophets, so now within a few days it would condemn and crucify the prophets' Master and King.

And Jesus on the day which this gospel speaks of, walking towards Jerusalem, came within sight of that beautiful city. He gazed upon its noble temple and its splendid palaces and public buildings. He foresaw the cruel passion which He would suffer at its hands. He foresaw the terrible curse which would blast and blight that lovely city only a generation or so afterwards. And a deep and generous sorrow filled His Sacred Heart.

He is true man as well as true God. He had every human virtue which can blossom in a human heart, and with other virtues the virtue of patriotism. No patriot in all the world's history has ever loved his native land more ardently than our Saviour loved Judea. And so on that day, as He looked upon Jerusalem, the capital city of Judea, the centre and the pride of His native country, and as He thought how soon it would be levelled to the ground and how bitterly its children would have to suffer, His Soul was filled with a great sadness until the tears flowed from His eyes. "When He drew near," the gospel says, "seeing the city, He wept over it, saying: 'Would that thou hadst known, and in this thy day, the things that are for thy peace! But they are hidden from thy eyes. And the days shall come upon thee; and thy enemies shall dig a trench about thee, and compass thee around, and straiten thee on every side, and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee; and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone.'"

Forty years afterwards this prophecy was fulfilled to the very letter. A rebellion arose in the province, and in order to crush out this rebellion a Roman army invaded Judea and laid siege to Jerusalem. They dug a trench all about it. They compassed it around and straitened it and hemmed it in on every side. They surrounded it with their fortified camps, separating it from the adjacent country and thus cutting off its supplies of food and water and gradually starving its people into submission. The citizens made a long and obstinate defense, but in vain. And at length, after enduring the horrors of the siege for five long months, being distracted and almost crazy with hunger and thirst and all the miseries of famine, they surrendered and threw open their gates. Then thousands of furious soldiers rushed into the city, slaughtering women and children as well as men, pillaging store-houses and dwellings, destroying palaces and temple; and when they had completed their work of destruction there was not left in Jerusalem a stone upon a stone.

The fall of Jerusalem is one of the most awful examples of the stern justice of God, with which history furnishes us. If the divine justice punishes whole cities and whole nations, surely it will not fail to punish individual men. Oftentimes that justice may seem to slumber. Oftentimes the sinner may go on for months and years piling sin upon sin, while God waits mercifully to see if he will turn to Him at last and repent. But nearly as often the sinner is cut down suddenly in the midst of his crimes. And those who are rash enough and foolish enough to live in mortal sin, can never be certain which of these fates may be theirs.

What we do know for certain, is this: that eternal, unending misery will be the portion beyond the grave of every human being who dies with mortal sin unforgiven on his soul. Therefore the state of grace is the only safe state for us to be in. The path of duty is the only wise path and the only peaceful path for us to follow. "Would that we might know, and in this our day, the things that are for our peace!"

Avarice and pride; the intemperate love of money; the intemperate love of luxuries, of fashion, of social distinction, of worldly honour; excessive feasting and drinking; sinful or dangerous worldly pleasures;—these are not the things that are for our peace. But to work God's Will in spite of obstacles; to keep the commandments of God and of His Church and fulfil our duty in spite of temptations; to dare to do right; to dare to wear "the white flower of a blameless life;"—these are peace and contentment and happiness even in this world, and everlasting happiness in the world to come.

May we understand this great truth and realize it. May we know in this our day the things that are for our peace; and not only know them, but do them, and live according to them.

XLV.—PROFANITY.

MARK, VII., 31-37.

(XI. SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.)

ST. Mark tells us in this gospel that our Saviour restored the power of speech to a dumb man by simply touching his tongue: "He touched his tongue, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke right."

It was a great mercy to give this poor man the power of speech. But there are persons, for whom it would almost seem to be a great mercy if God would take away from them the gift of speech, so that they might not be able any longer to curse and swear and take God's holy name in vain.

How has it come to pass that profanity is so common among us? How is it that not only in anger and hatred, but even in sport and in friendly conversation, men sprinkle their discourse with these disgusting oaths, as if they were beautiful ornaments of language? How does it happen that a person cannot walk on certain streets without hearing this filthy cursing more than once in a day from men, and sometimes from women, and even from little boys so young that they have scarcely learned to talk?

It must be because people learn the bad habit one from another, because friends pick it up from their friends, inferiors from their superiors, children from their elders, and too often from their own parents. Shame on such fathers and mothers! God has given them their little ones to educate for heaven and for Him; and instead of doing this, they are leading them in an opposite direction. Whether it is drunkenness which makes them curse and swear before their children, or sheer ignorance, or a natural sottishness, they are scandalizing those little ones, of whom our Saviour said: "Whosoever shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in Me, it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea" (MARK, IX., 41.). The habit of profanity spreads from one person to another like a contagious disease. Young boys hear their elders cursing, and knowing no better, they conclude that it's a fine and a manly thing to be able to swear a good round oath. Young men with not much more sense than little boys, arrive at the same opinion, and seem to think that it shows courage and independence to curse frequently.

Of course it is not so. Even in the eyes of the world the habit of swearing is no accomplishment, but rather a sign of bad breeding and ignorance. Far

from being the mark of a man, it is often the mark of a bully and coward. So that a gentleman at the present time, or a man who has any pretensions to be a gentleman, whether he be Christian or pagan, Catholic, Protestant or infidel, will not be heard swearing. If he has not reverence for God, he has at least respect for himself. He knows that the greatest amount of cursing is done by the lowest class of people, and he does not wish to be taken for one of that class.

I am not speaking of blasphemy at all, because that awful mortal sin is very rarely committed by Christian men or women; but I am speaking of the much more common venial sins of swearing and of ordinary profanity. As for blasphemy,—that is a crime of extreme magnitude, common with the devils and the lost souls in hell, but much rarer with men and women on this earth. The deliberate blasphemer, like the loud-mouthed atheist, is nearly always unsincere in his irreligious utterances; and where he is sincere, he is often daft or weak-minded. He is a worm of the earth, feeble and helpless. He can *feel* his little pains and disappointments, his anger and hatred,—but that is all. And being unable to reach the Creator with his puny hands, he tries to lash at Him with his venomous tongue. He is like a weak woman who stands in the open street scolding some person whom she cannot strike.

So I am not speaking about the deliberate blasphemer nor the blustering, ranting anarchist, for these are abnormal and freaks of nature; we should pity them and pray for them, that God may bring them back to sane common-sense and to the right exercise of their minds and faculties. But I am speaking of the Christian man and woman in the full possession of reason and intellect, who hold to the same true faith that they always held to, and yet who allow themselves to fall into these venial bad habits of cursing and swearing and profanity.

And even this ordinary profanity very often has the sin of scandal attached to it. "Woe to the world because of scandals," said our Divine Saviour. "It must needs be that scandals come. But nevertheless woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh" (MATT., XVIII., 7.). It is seldom when alone that one curses or swears or takes the Name of God in vain, but almost always when in the company of other persons. And by the bad example thus set the profane person is teaching his companions to be profane; or if they have the bad habit already, he is encouraging them to continue in it.

What could be more surprising and, I might say, more disgusting, than to hear Christians, whose souls have been redeemed by the Precious Blood of our Saviour, dragging down His sacred Name into the dust of the street, into angry quarrels and drunken brawls? What could be more sickening than to hear Christian tongues, blessed with the blessed salt at baptism, consecrated again

and again through receiving the Body and Blood of Christ in Holy Communion, belittling that holy Name which they were formed to bless?

The profane person should neither blind himself to his guilt, even though it be venial, nor think too lightly of it; but even as he has contracted the sinful habit through his own fault, so he should rid himself of it by his own earnest efforts. Let us beseech God to guard us, and all His children, from these sins of the tongue. Let us pray to our Saviour, Who gave back the power of speech to the dumb man, that He may guide and direct our words and conversation, and may keep us, not only from the hideously mortal sin of blasphemy, but even from these lesser, venial evils of cursing and swearing and every other profane use of His holy Name.

XLVI.—“MY NEIGHBOR.”

LUKE, X., 23-37.

(XII. SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.)

WHEN the lawyer asked our Saviour “Who is my neighbor?”, our Divine Lord answered his question by telling the beautiful story of the good Samaritan.

It was as if He said: Every human being is your neighbor, no matter what race he springs from, no matter what religion he professes; and you are bound to love your neighbor as yourself: that is, you are obliged, not only to wish well to *all*, not only to refrain from injuring any, but also to relieve and benefit others whenever you have the chance. The unfeeling Jewish priest and the uncharitable levite let such a chance slip, in the hardness of their hearts; while the good Samaritan seized the opportunity and saved his neighbor's life.

This is the story, as our Divine Saviour told it: A Jew on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho fell among robbers. They beat him cruelly and stripped him of everything valuable which he possessed and left him there on the road half-dead from his wounds. Then when a levite of his own nation, one of those who had charge of the temple and the sacred things in it, and who should have been extremely good and charitable, saw him lying there, he passed him by as if he were a log. Afterwards a Jewish priest journeyed that way; he also saw the wounded man in the road, yet did not stop to assist him. But at last there came along one of those Samaritans whom the Jews disliked so much that they would not even eat or drink with them, a man who belonged to a hostile nation and followed a false religion; and this stranger had compassion on the wounded Jew, and “bound up his wounds,” and brought him to the nearest tavern, where he could be nursed and taken care of, and paid his expenses there.

Thus the priest of the only true religion of that time, and the levite whose very business and profession was the practice of that holy religion, both committed grievous sins against charity by leaving the wounded man to his fate; while the good Samaritan, member of a hated race though he was and follower of a false religion, proved his love for his neighbor by doing his duty towards him.

We have often heard the words of our Divine Lord: “Whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them” (MAT., VII., 12.). We

well know His great commandment: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (MARK, XII., 31.). Now, who is our neighbor?

Our Divine Saviour has answered the question for all time by this parable of the good Samaritan. Every human being is our neighbor: every human being, of every family, nation, race, and religion: Catholic and Protestant, Christian, Jew and Pagan, white or black, yellow, red and brown: everyone who has been created to the image and likeness of God, and who walks erect upon this earth and looks up to heaven with a human face: every member of the great human family is our neighbor, and must be the object of our love. To all without exception we must at least wish well; to all without exception we must refrain from doing injury; and we are also strictly bound to assist all who sorely need our assistance, as often as it comes in our way to be able to do so.

All are our neighbors then; but of course some are nearer neighbors than others. Nearest of all is a person's own family,—wife or husband, children; parents, brothers and sisters; for these, people are bound to cherish a special love, greater than their love for all the rest. Next to family are relatives and friends, and one's love for friends and kindred is naturally stronger and warmer than one's love for mankind in general. Then the members of our own true religion too are nearer to us in many ways than those outside of the Church. Likewise our fellow-countrymen are nearer than the citizens of foreign lands. And the nearer people are, the more we may love them, and the more chances we shall have to show our love.

But near or far, "nothing human" should be entirely foreign to us: We should feel, if possible, an interest in all and a warm sympathy with all. Thus when peace is made after some terrible war, even though that war were thousands of miles away from us, the Pope sends out his congratulations from Rome, and every Christian heart rejoices. So we should always be glad at the good-fortune of others; and we may never rejoice at human woe. If I really wish evil, even to a Hindu in the heart of India, I sin against the love of neighbor. If I should deliberately work an injury to some Negro in the depths of Africa, I would break the great commandment of Christ. And if I fail to save even a pagan, from drowning for example, or from starvation or extreme hunger, when I can do so with little risk or injury to myself, then I am no true Christian.

To risk one's own life or to seriously injure oneself in doing good to others, is not commanded. That would be heroism; and all cannot be heroes. It is well for those who can. Even if it were a criminal who died in saving the lives of others, we would hope that he was saved. How could we despair of one who lost his life in the practice of heroic virtue? In the heart of such

as one we would feel confident that there must have been love for God joined with his heroic love for his neighbor, and that at the last moment at least there was perfect contrition. It's a wonderful and a most beautiful spectacle to see that heroic virtue, which made the saints, shining out spasmodically now and then even in persons who are not saints. Nevertheless although the fireman, the police-officer, the soldier, the physician or nurse, and the priest may all be bound in duty to risk their lives, yet people who do not hold such responsible positions, are not strictly commanded to seriously injure themselves in benefiting others.

But whenever you can do good to others without great risk or injury to yourself, then you are bound in charity to do so. Especially when it is in your power to render assistance which your neighbor is in extreme and bitter need of, it is your bounden duty to render it. And no true Christian will stop to ask in such a case whether the needy object is a tramp or a respectable man, nor to find out what is his colour and his race, or what religion he belongs to.

For all are our neighbors when they need our help; although only the generous and charitable are likely to prove themselves our neighbors when we need their help. Thus in the parable of today's gospel the heartless priest and the uncharitable levite passed the wounded Jew without a thought of compassion; while the good Samaritan pitied him and cared for him.

"Which of these three, in thy opinion, was neighbor to him who fell among the robbers?", our Saviour asked; and when the lawyer answered "He that showed mercy to him," Jesus said: "Go and do thou in like manner."

So let us ever strive to do during our short lives upon this earth, showing mercy to one another, loving our neighbor as ourself in God and for God's sake; rejoicing at the happiness of others, grieving in their sorrow; wishing well to all, refraining from injuring any, and doing good at every opportunity.

For in every one of us is His image and likeness. All alike are the work of His hands, created by Him. All are His children, Who is more and more changing the world as time goes on and softening and civilizing it by His grace and through His Church; Who is drawing mankind little by little into peace and human sympathy and love for one another; Who said at His last supper on the night before He suffered and died: "A new commandment I give unto you: That you love one another. As I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another" (JOHN, XIII., 34-35).

XLVII.—GRATITUDE.

LUKE, XVII., 11-19.

(XIII. SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.)

IT is our strict duty to be thankful to God and men for favors received, and not only to feel our gratitude, but to express it too in word and deed. The gospel that I have just now read to you, reminds us of this duty, for in it our Saviour complains bitterly of men's ingratitude. Out of ten whom he cured that day only one went back to thank him. And Jesus said: "Were not ten made clean? and where are the nine? There is none found to return and give glory to God, but this stranger."

It was a very great miracle that those nine were thankless for. Leprosy is an incurable disease, at least the doctors can do nothing with it. Once it lays hold of its victim, beginning on the outside, and from the skin gradually rotting its way inwards through flesh and bone, the physicians can only order the sick man removed to a leper-hospital, where others will not catch the disease from him and where he may be made as comfortable as possible until death relieves him.

Hospitals are an invention of Christianity and are all directly or indirectly a result of our Divine Saviour's teachings. There were no hospitals in His time; and hence the poor lepers had to shift for themselves. They were forbidden to enter any town or village and were forced to live as best they could out in the waste and desert places. Sometimes they dwelt alone in those solitary regions, and sometimes they lived together in groups. They were forbidden to come near to any healthy person, and if one should approach them, it was their duty to shout and warn him. Because this disease was as contagious and incurable then as it is now.

Yet our Divine Lord could cure it, as He could do all things. He did cure it over and over again. And so on that day, when the ten lepers all grouped together stood afar off, not daring to come nearer, and shouted to Him: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us,!" He simply spoke to them, and they were healed.

Certainly they should have been extremely thankful, for the favour granted them was a very great one. One of them was thankful, and expressed his gratitude. "One of them when he saw that he was made clean," the gospel tells us, "went back, with a loud voice glorifying God," and fell upon his face

before our Saviour's blessed feet, "giving thanks: and this was a Samaritan." And Jesus said: "Were not ten made clean? and where are the nine? There is no one found to return and give glory to God, but this stranger."

Let us ask ourselves to-day: Can it be so bad as this with us? Is it possible that among us only one out of ten properly thanks God for His blessings and favours?

To be thankful to God, is a solemn duty for us. "Be ye filled with the Holy Ghost," wrote St. Paul, "giving thanks always for all things in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God and the Father" (EPHES., V., 18-20.). "In all things give thanks," he wrote again, "for this is the Will of God" (I. THESS., V., 18.). And a thousand years before St. Paul had written his inspired epistles, the royal prophet said: "Know ye that the Lord, He is God: He made us and not we ourselves. We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Go ye into His gates with praise, into His courts with hymns: and be thankful to Him" (Ps., XCIX., 3., 4.).

God strictly requires this of us, that we should "be thankful to Him." A considerable part of our prayer should be thanksgiving, especially at Mass and at Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. And even during the ordinary week-days of our lives "My God, I thank Thee!" or "Thanks be to God!" should be a common phrase on our lips and a frequent thought in our hearts.

It is our duty to give thanks not only to God, but to men. We must show our thankfulness even to the stranger who does any little courtesy to us. Good manners and good breeding are founded almost as largely on gratitude, as on humility; for gratitude is a law of nature, which no one can break without being unnatural. An ungrateful friend is inhuman. An ungrateful child is a monster and a freak. "He that rendereth evil for good," says Holy Scripture, "evil shall not depart from his house" (PROV., XVII., 13.). And those who are thankless towards men, will likewise be ingrates towards God. "He that loveth not his brother, whom he seeth, how can he love God, Whom he seeth not?" (I. JOHN, IV., 20.).

So let us learn this lesson of to-day's gospel, or re-learn it if we have already known and perhaps forgotten it, to be grateful to men but above all to be grateful to God. We know that He is kind even "to the unthankful and to the evil" (LUKE, VI., 35.). But He is still kinder to those who do not forget to give Him thanks. We lose many new blessings by neglecting to be thankful for the old ones. How much more powerful our prayers would be and how many more favours they would draw down from heaven, if we had only been careful to fitly thank God for His favours already received!

During that solemn part of the Mass when the priest is reciting or singing the Preface, these are the words of thanksgiving which the Church is sending

up to God by his mouth: "Truly meet and just is it, right and wholesome, for us always and everywhere to give thanks to Thee, holy Lord, almighty Father, eternal God, through Christ our Lord! Through Whom the angels praise Thy majesty, the dominations adore It, the powers tremble, the heavens and the virtues of the heavens, with the blessed seraphim, exultantly with one heart glorify It. With whom, we beseech Thee, bid our voices be admitted, while we say in suppliant confession: Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of Sabaoth! Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory. Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

"What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered unto me," exclaimed King David (Ps., CXV., 3.). We can at least render "thanks, the sweetest, kindest, readiest recompense." We can say with holy Tobias: "I bless Thee, O Lord God of Israel, because Thou hast chastised me and Thou hast saved me!" (TOBIAS, XI., 17.). When we notice the many good things of our chequered lives, we can frequently ejaculate with our lips or in our hearts: "Blessed be God!", "Blessed be His holy Name!", "My God, I thank Thee!"; and at the end of every meal make a short thanksgiving with the sign of the cross; and at Mass with our Holy Communion, at Benediction, and in our longer prayers, not only adore God and humble ourselves before Him, not only express our faith, hope, love and sorrow for sin, not only offer ourselves to Him with all we do and have and are, and make good resolutions, and beg favours for ourselves and others, but also thank Him for the favours and blessings He has already poured out upon us.

"Were not ten made clean? and where are the nine?", said our Divine Saviour. "There is no one found to return and give glory to God, but this stranger."

May we never be thankless nor heartless like those nine ingrates. But even as we so often thank friends or acquaintances or even strangers here upon this earth for their little kindnesses to us, so over and over again let us raise our minds and hearts above this earth in a fervent "Thanks be to God!" May we thank Him while life lasts for the life which He has given; and thank Him when death comes, as the royal David did, for that very death, which is but the door or the stepping-stone to the vastly greater life that follows after it: "Turn, O my soul, into thy rest, for the Lord hath been bountiful to thee! For He hath delivered my *soul* from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from falling. I will please the Lord in the land of the living" (Ps., CXIV., 7-9.).

XLVIII.—“BE NOT SOLICITOUS.”

MATT., VI., 24-33.

(XIV. SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.)

“No man can serve two masters,” especially two masters who give contrary orders. For example, if one master bids a man be generous and charitable while another master bids him be selfish and avaricious, it is clear that he cannot please both. If it is love which makes him serve, “he will hate the one and love the other;” if it is fear, “he will sustain the one and despise the other.” But whether it be love or fear which causes him to obey, it is plain that a man cannot serve two masters who give contrary orders. “You cannot serve God and mammon.”

THE word “mammon” signifies money, and is used quite often in the Sacred Scriptures to denote the riches of this world.

Our Saviour does not say that you cannot serve God and at the same time own money. He does not say that you cannot serve God and work for money. What He does say is, that you cannot serve God and *serve* money, or in other words, be the slave of money. In those ancient times nearly every servant was a slave. The employer did not simply pay a day's wages and own a day's labour; but without paying any wages he owned not only his servant's labour but his body and his life. And so when our Divine Lord assures us that we cannot serve God and Mammon, the meaning is that so long as we are the slaves of Mammon, we cannot serve God.

Now there is a great difference between owning money and being the slave of money. In one case the man is the master of his money; in the other case the money is the master of the man.

When a man *owns* his money and is the master of it, then he does what he pleases with it. He is not afraid to part with small portions of it. He gives it freely according to his means for every good and sensible purpose. Such a man will not be solicitous and over-anxious. He does not fret and worry about his affairs nor grumble continually at having little means and a small income, but is contented and cheerful and peaceful in mind whether he

has little or much. The love of money shall not make him dishonest, nor uncharitable and hard-hearted, nor grasping, nor miserly. He will never allow the pursuit of riches to betray him into doing what is wrong, nor to hinder him from doing what is right according to his means; because he is the master of his money and not its slave, and he will rule his wealth and not be ruled by it.

But when the money is the master of the man or woman, and the man or woman the money's slave, then all is different. Many years ago our country was called, with more or less justice, "the land of the almighty dollar," and to judge from what little we have seen of this new century, it's going to be a century of gigantic money-making and of servile money-worship. Like little boys scrambling after pennies, people at the opening of this twentieth century seem to be knocking one another down and tumbling over one another in their frantic efforts to snatch all the money within their reach. Now anyone disinterested enough and broad-minded enough to look with amusement,—that is, with compassionate amusement,—on these money-grabbing times, will find no more pitiable sight on all this earth than the men and women who are the slaves of their money. He will not have to go far to find them, either. They are in every city; yes, in every parish. In their judgment everything is secondary to the dollar. In their lives there is neither poetry nor music, neither beauty nor nobility. They can't be sincerely religious, because religion does not pay ten-per-cent dividends. Piety in their estimation is a poor investment. And they scarcely care enough to work hard for heaven itself, because there's no money in it.

When the money is the master of the man and he its slave, he hoards up the dollars in his strong-box or in the bank or in real-estate, he guards his money and worships it like a false god in a pagan temple. His wealth, small or great, is sacred in his eyes. He is afraid to touch it, and there is nothing that he dreads so much as the loss of it, or the thought of parting with even a small portion of it.

And yet he makes little use of his money,—either for good purposes, or for his own comfort, or for the benefit of those around him. If he gives anything to charitable or religious purposes, it is far less than what he has the means to give. He is not *free* to give, because he is the slave of money; and very soon the vice of avarice has complete possession of him. Little by little he learns to love his business more than his religion, and to consider earthly success as more important than eternal salvation. He gives up his faith for the sake of worldly success; or if he continues in the outward practice of his religion, he loses all the warmth and life of that religion. Warmth and life and love are hardened and frozen in his sordid heart. He has neither love of God nor love for his neighbor. He has love for nothing except money and money-

making. His heart and soul are in these; and in place of the warm piety and generosity which God planted in his heart, there is nothing left now but avarice and miserable selfishness.

This is the wretched state of the men and women who are the slaves of their money instead of being its masters; and it is some such condition as this that our Divine Saviour has in mind when He tells us that we cannot at one and the same time be the slaves of money and the servants of God. "You cannot serve God and Mammon."

And having thus warned us against the vice of avarice, He goes on to instruct us how to avoid that vice. It is solicitude and over-anxiety about the affairs of this world, which generally lead men and women into the vice of avarice. Therefore our Lord bids us not to be too anxious about food and clothing and the means of obtaining them: "Be not solicitous for your life what you shall eat, nor for your body what you shall put on."

He does not say "Be not industrious," "Be not thrifty," but "Be not solicitous." He does not forbid us to work for such things as are necessary or useful to us. But He condemns that over-anxiety about our work which might lead us into avarice and destroy our generosity and charity.

As to the labour itself, far from forbidding that, He desires and commands that we perform it faithfully. Idleness is never praised in the Sacred Scriptures, but always condemned. Men must work to maintain themselves and to support their families, and must imitate the great Apostle, who preferred, even while he was preaching the Gospel from town to town, to labour with his own hands rather than be a burden to his friends. In one of his inspired epistles this very apostle tells us that "he who refuses to work deserves not to eat" (II. THESS., III., 10.).

Therefore it is our strict duty on the one hand to labour honestly in our various callings and thus maintain ourselves. But on the other hand it is no less strict a duty for us to guard ourselves carefully against over-anxiety and avarice and miserliness.

And hence our Saviour says: "Be not solicitous for your life what you shall eat, nor for your body what you shall put on." "Be not solicitous," that is, be not anxious, or rather, over-anxious. Work zealously, but always with trust in God. Save and lay by for a stormy day, provide your children, if possible, with a better start in life than you had yourself;—but without ever slackening in generosity or in charity towards others. Give to the orphan, to the needy stranger, to the house of God, to every good purpose,—and give in proportion to your means. Remember that such a small sum as the widow's mite would never have pleased our Divine Lord if it had come from a millionaire widow. The wealthier one grows, the more one is bound to give. And the duty of giving, like the duties of praying or worshiping on Sundays or keeping the other commandments, lasts to the very end of our lives.

Fulfilling this duty then according to your means and circumstances, do not fret and worry about your business. Let no difficulty, no failure, disturb your cheerfulness and peace of soul. Make sure that you are doing your best, that you are working steadily with industry and thrift, that you are neither lazy nor extravagant. See to it that you are not loafing and idling without good cause, nor spending in drink or in other foolishness the money which you should be saving up for your family. And then, whether you are rich or poor, successful or unsuccessful, go on cheerfully, free from anxiety and in peace of soul, keeping the commandments and fully trusting in God for the paltry little necessities of this present life as well as for the happiness and glory of the life to come.

And God will never fail us thus trusting in Him,—neither in the world to come nor in this present world. He Who gave us our life and our bodies, will He refuse us the food necessary for supporting that life and the raiment with which to clothe those bodies? “Is not the life more than the meat, and the body more than raiment?” He Who “marks the sparrow’s fall,”—He Who watches so tenderly over even the smallest of His creatures,—will surely guard and protect His human beings, who are the summit and the crown of His creation. “Behold the birds of the air. For they neither sow nor do they reap nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not you of much more value than they?:-----Consider the lilies of the field how they grow. They toil not, neither do they spin.” Yet it is the matchless and faultless taste of our Divine Lord Himself which tells us that King Solomon in all his glory, with his jewelled crown and his robes of gold, was not so splendidly dressed, so perfectly arrayed, as one of those lilies. “If therefore the grass of the field, which to-day is, and tomorrow is cast into the fire, God doth so clothe, how much more you, O ye of little faith!”

We should have more faith, more trust in God; and then there would be less of fretfulness and anxiety in our hearts, less of the avarice and miserliness which that over-anxiety so often leads us into, and more of charity and of generosity. “Be not solicitous therefore, saying: ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘Wherewith shall we be clothed?’----- for your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things.”

We should do our best in our various duties, and then be contented and peaceful, leaving it to God to crown our efforts. And while giving all industry and diligence to our worldly occupations, we should always keep the largest share of our attention and the warmest spot in our hearts for those higher and more important religious duties, which regard God and the eternal welfare of our souls. “Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice,—and all *these* things will be added unto you.”

XLIX.—SADNESS CHANGED INTO JOY.

LUKE, VII., 11-16.

(XV. SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.)

THIS short gospel is full of meaning. It gives us a most vivid picture of sadness changed into joy by the power and goodness of God.

What could be more desolate than the scene described in the opening verses of this gospel: a funeral-procession wending its way out of the city of Naim towards the tombs beyond its walls; a bier carried by pall-bearers, according to the custom of that country, where hearses or funeral-cars were never seen; on the bier the corpse, the body of a young man, the only son of his mother; and that mother, a widow, deprived now alike of husband and son, walking after the beloved remains and weeping bitterly in her loneliness and desolation. Surely the funeral-procession was as sad a sight as most persons have ever looked upon.

But see how God's goodness and power in one instant can change sadness into joy. Our Divine Lord was approaching Naim that very morning, and as He drew near to the gates of the city, He met this mournful procession. One glance at the widowed mother walking so sorrowfully behind the body of her son, was enough to touch His sacred Heart. Perhaps He remembered His Mother at that moment, who was to lose Him, her only Son, less than two years afterwards. It may have been for His blessed Mother's sake that He pitied this afflicted woman, and changed her sadness into joy. "He was moved with mercy towards her," says the Gospel, and He bade her cease weeping and lamenting. "He came near and touched the bier" until the pall-bearers set it down upon the ground. Then He took the hand of the dead man, that lifeless, powerless hand, into His all-powerful one and spoke to him: "'Young man, I say to thee, arise!' And he that was dead, sat up and began to speak. And He gave him to his mother."

We can imagine what a transformation was thus wrought in that mother's heart. We even wonder how she could live through that moment of supreme joy, in which she was raised up so suddenly from the deepest depths of sorrow to the happiness of possessing her son once more. Certainly in all the pages of Holy Scripture there is no better example of sadness changed into joy by the power and the goodness of God.

And yet this is a specimen of what God is continually doing for His human

creatures. From the beginning of the world to the present time, and from the present time to the end of all things, God is constantly transforming sadness into joy. From the moment when the sin in Paradise first brought sorrow into the world until the day of general and final judgment, God is eternally changing sadness into joy. Sometimes He brings this change about by a miracle, as it happened in the case which we have just now been considering; much more often He brings it about by the ordinary laws of nature; but in one way or another God's power and goodness are continually working this change. If we make one solitary exception,—if we except those men and women who become God's enemies and remain God's enemies,—those men and women, in other words, who persist in living and dying in mortal sin,—if we make this one exception, then we may safely say that no sorrow or sadness ever enters a human heart, which God does not sooner or later change into joy.

Look at the troubles and disappointments of childhood. They seem small and trivial to us, and yet for the moment they make the little boy and the little girl so sad, that you might think they would never smile again. But how rapidly their little troubles pass away, after all, and how quickly in the ordinary course of nature, God changes their childish sadness into joy and gives them back their innocent happiness!

And then consider the afflictions of maturer years, hunger and thirst, poverty and bereavement, sickness and death, temptation and sin. Have you ever awaked out of a troubled dream? Have you imagined in sleep that some hideous monster was crushing you to the earth, or that you were falling from a dreadful precipice into some horrible abyss? What a relief it was to awaken at that very moment and to find yourself safe and secure in your comfortable bed! It is thus that sufferings and trials, like troubled dreams, pass away one after another from those who keep themselves in God's friendship and grace. It is thus that sooner or later God changes their sadness into joy.

Poverty is a cause of sadness to many people; but by steady industry the poor man gradually grows more comfortable. If he keeps the commandments and lives a Christian life, God will bless his honest toil and little by little change his sadness into joy. And even though he should remain poor all his life in this world, yet in that other world at least, he will be rich, for heaven itself will be his own.

Sickness also is a source of sadness. Everything seems dark and dreary to the sick man or the sick woman. The sunshine itself looks gloomy when one is sick or in pain. Yet a little patience, and the feeble body through God's goodness will recover its health and strength, and life will brighten up once more. But it may be an illness from which there is no recovery. Well, even then, if we keep ourselves in the friendship and grace of God, He in His Own

good time will mercifully change our sadness into joy. A few months, a few years at most, of resignation and patience, and death will come, to end the sick man's and the sick woman's sufferings, and to begin their eternal happiness.

Death likewise is a cause of great sadness. To the mourning relatives and friends, who remain behind on this side of the grave, death seems to be the saddest thing on earth. But to the virtuous soul of the departed one, which has passed beyond the grave into the everlasting life, death opens up such wonderful happiness as the mind of man upon this earth has never conceived.

"The grave itself is but a covered bridge

Which leads from light to light through a brief darkness."

The death of the just man or the just woman is one of the most perfect means which God ever makes use of, to change the sadness of His human beings into joy.

Sadness also arises from the resistance of temptation. Something attractive but sinful, presents itself before a person's mind, like the forbidden fruit in Paradise, and very often it costs pangs and pains to resist the temptation. There are certain men and women who have a continual craving in their hearts for sinful pleasures of one kind or another; they have to watch themselves and mortify their wills from morning to night in order to deny themselves what is sinful; and at certain times this causes them no little sadness. But how quickly, after all, God will banish such sadness from their hearts, if they will only persevere, even for a few years, in leading the life of grace!

If on the contrary they yield to temptation and fall into sin, especially mortal sin, then they must experience the worst sadness of all. The man who is guilty of mortal sin and remains in that dreadful state, must in the very nature of things have an uneasy conscience and a wretched life and a sad, gloomy heart. If he persists in his obstinacy and finally dies in his sin, then his soul will never know happiness; his misery will endure forever and ever. But if he resolves to abandon his sin, approaches God in the confessional, takes that only road which leads to pardon, and humbly asks for forgiveness,—then even the sadness of mortal sin, which is the worst sadness of all, will be changed by God's power and goodness into peace and joy.

And so we perceive that, although God is not continually working wonderful miracles like that described in today's gospel, yet He is eternally in some way or other changing sadness into joy. And we understand that every sorrow which ever enters a human heart,—with the sole exception of that worst of all miseries, final impenitence or death in mortal sin,—is sooner or later changed into happiness by the mercy of God.

If we are wise then, we will not consider our petty trials and sufferings of such vast importance after all. Just a little patience and they will vanish,

like the mist before the morning sun. You never yet saw a night which was not followed by the morning, and you probably never had an affliction or grief in the whole course of your life which did not soften as time wore on, and grow more bearable, and finally pass away. Have patience then. Do not grumble because your coat is sprinkled by a few clean drops of summer rain,. Do not murmur that those lives of yours, which being once begun are everlasting, are broken into now and then by five minutes, or five weeks, or even five years, of trial and affliction. When we arrive in heaven, it may be that we will almost laugh at ourselves, if I may use that expression, for having worried and fretted so much, over such little things, here on this foolish earth.

Keep in the friendship of God, and wait patiently for His wisdom and mercy to change every suffering and sorrow into joy and delight. If you are free from grievous sin, take every precaution to remain so. If you are guilty of mortal sin, go to confession and make your peace with the Creator and become the friends of Him Who holds your little lives in the hollow of His almighty hand. And as surely as the widowed mother of today's gospel received back from Christ her dear dead son, as surely as the longest and severest winter melts away finally before the spring., as surely as the blackest storm-clouds will break up little by little and yield place to the blue sky and the bright sunshine,—so surely the kind God and Father of all in His Own good time will change your humiliations into glory, and your sadness into joy

L.—DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART.

(SUNDAY BEFORE THE FEAST.)

"Come to Me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you.

"Take up My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart: and you shall find rest to your souls.

"For My yoke is sweet and My burden light" (MATT., XI., 28-30.).

THESE words are taken from the Gospel according to St. Matthew, being the 28th., 29th. and 30th. verses of the eleventh chapter.

There is one thing remarkable about this text of Holy Writ. It is the only text of Scripture in which our Saviour directly mentions His sacred Heart.

He had just been condemning the proud and the wise ones of this world in the persons of the Pharisees, who opposed His teachings and fought bitterly and treacherously against Him. He raised His divine eyes to heaven and praised the eternal Father for having hidden His mysteries from the wise and prudent and revealed them to little ones. And then turning to the "little ones" who were near Him at the time, His humble apostles and the poor and simple people who crowded up around Him, He spoke those words of consolation and love: "Come to Me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you. Take up My yoke upon you and learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart: and you shall find rest to your souls. For My yoke is sweet and My burden light."

It is one of the notable facts of revelation, that the only passage of Holy Scripture in which our Divine Lord is recorded as having made mention of His sacred Heart, should also be a passage in which He promises refreshment and rest of soul, consolation and sweetness, to those who would draw near to Him and learn of Him. And like all the promises of Christ, this promise is being more and more richly fulfilled as time goes on. Myriads of toil-worn, heavily burdened, weary men and women have drawn near to our Saviour during these nineteen centuries of the Church, and have striven to learn of Him inasmuch as He is meek and humble of heart; and they have found rest to their souls. Myriads have taken up His yoke upon them, and have discovered to their everlasting consolation and happiness that the yoke is sweet and the burden light. Millions and millions even at the present day are ex-

periencing refreshment and sweetness of spirit, ever increasing and ever renewed, in their devotion to the sacred Heart of Jesus.

The devotion to the sacred Heart of our Divine Lord is one of the greatest devotions of modern times. It is scarcely more than two centuries old, in its present form at least, and yet it has spread over the entire world, and has taken a very firm hold upon the Christian people.

We see its societies everywhere, fulfilling their splendid destiny, spreading out their influence for good. Look at the League of the Sacred Heart alone. Nearly two-million promoters are pushing forward its noble work in every land which the sun shines upon. Thirty millions of people already belong to it, and unite with one another every morning in offering to our Saviour through the immaculate heart of Mary the prayers, works and sufferings of the day for all the intentions of His divine Heart. The Archconfraternity of the Sacred Heart is also a vast organization. And there are many other societies, smaller and less important than these, whose sole end and object however are the propagation of this grand devotion to the sacred Heart of our Saviour.

Then the literature of the devotion is likewise something enormous. If all the books about the Sacred Heart that have been printed, were gathered together in one spot, they would form a library of more than eight-hundred volumes. The Catholic magazines and journals which dedicate themselves to this subject, are very numerous. Not to speak of the literary work which is being done by other associations, the League of the Sacred Heart alone publishes more than forty monthly magazines in twenty-five countries and in sixteen different languages, whose principal concern is to explain, to help on, and to encourage this devotion to the sacred Heart of Jesus.

Surely the hand of God is plainly visible in this great religious movement which is stirring up the whole Christian world so powerfully and so fruitfully in our modern times. Surely, if we are to judge of the tree by its fruits, we must admit that it is our Divine Lord and no other, Who is pouring into the world this great devotion to His sacred Heart.

Now June is the month of devotion to the Heart of Jesus, and Friday of this week will be the great feast-day of that devotion. But there are minor feasts of the sacred Heart, Fridays also, which occur in each month throughout the year.

You are familiar with those "First Fridays," and you know how strongly they appeal to the hearts and souls of the Christian people. You have observed the crowds around the confessionals on the Thursday evening. Boston and New York, Vienna, Paris and London present wonderful spectacles on the first Friday of the month. Even in our own little city you have seen the multitudes pouring into the churches, through frost and snow, in summer and winter,

for the Mass before daybreak as well as for the other Masses, on the first Friday morning. You have been among their number perhaps as they crowded up to the altar-railings to receive the Communion of reparation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus,—reparation to that Heart Which so loves men and Which men have so vilely insulted. Without doubt it is almost a miraculous manifestation of the power of this grand devotion, which may be seen in our churches on the first Friday of the month. Surely these multitudes of awakened and enkindled souls who notwithstanding the long day of toil which is stretching out before them, leave their beds in the winter darkness of the first Friday morning to receive the Communion of Reparation, must be pleasing to God. For vaguely and imperfectly at least, they are striving to draw near to our Saviour, slowly and gradually they are growing to love and to learn of Him Who is meek and humble of heart. And little by little they may hope to obtain the sweetness and the refreshment and the rest to their souls which He promised long ago when He said: "Come to Me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you. Take up My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart: and you shall find rest to your souls. For My yoke is sweet and My burden light."

How few the Catholic families are nowadays, in which some members at least do not observe these monthly "first Fridays!" How few are the Catholic homes in which the picture of the sacred Heart may not be seen,—as a book-mark in the prayer-books, and in larger form displayed upon the walls of the dwelling-rooms. We know that picture well. It is becoming very familiar to Catholic eyes and very dear to them: the tapering, deep-red heart, with the thorns entwined around it, and the spear-wound near its center; the drops of the sacred, sacrificed blood falling from it; and above it the little cross, emblem of the sufferings and bitter death of our Divine Lord, and the flames which symbolize His burning, devouring love for men. A certain consecration and blessedness comes into the homes in which this picture is exposed, not so much for the picture's own sake as on account of the family devotion to the Heart of Jesus, which its presence indicates and which it helps to foster. Just as when we gaze upon the portrait of some dear friend, we remember and think of him whom that portrait represents; so when we look upon a picture of the Sacred Heart, there is brought very vividly before our minds the grand object of this most beautiful devotion, the human heart which beats in the human breast of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For it is not only the human soul of our Divine Lord under the name of "heart," but also the material, human heart of our Saviour, which is the object of our devotion; and this devotion rests upon as sound and reasonable a foundation as any other devotion of Catholic worship. We should remember

that not alone the godhead of our Lord, but likewise His human soul and His human body demand our adoration. It would be the wildest kind of heresy to try to divide Christ, separating His divinity from His humanity. It would be the wildest sort of heresy to hold, for example, that there are two Christs, the one God and the other man, or that Christ as God is one person and Christ as man another person. For in our Divine Lord of course there are not two persons, but only one. Now this one adorable person of Christ has two natures, the divine nature and the human nature; and in Him each of these two natures is strictly and completely adorable. We worship our Saviour's divinity for its own sake; we worship His humanity because it is inseparably united with His divinity in the one divine person of Christ. We adore the human soul and the human body of our Divine Lord, on account of their close and indivisible union with His godhead.

And therefore every portion of our Saviour's body may be the object of our adoration. And as a matter of fact special devotions have sprung up from time to time, which the Church, far from discouraging, has praised and commended. The wounds of our Divine Lord have been an object of worship in the Church from the most ancient times. There is a popular devotion to the Holy Face, worn with weariness and pain and abandonment, covered after the rough usage it had undergone, with dirt and blood, such as it impressed its sacred features on the napkin of St. Veronica. Some saints have given particular thought and meditation to our Saviour's thorn-crowned head. Others have felt a special devotion towards the sacred hands and feet pierced by the nails.

But the heart is the noblest organ of the human body. It is the chief seat of life, the fountain of the blood. In the heart the spark of life first enkindles. In the heart expiring vitality lasts longest. Death comes to the limbs, to the smaller organs, even to the head and brain, before it falls upon the heart. If you had watched by many death-beds, you would know this well. The feet become as cold as ice. The hands and arms grow cold. The forehead is like marble, and the cheeks, and throat; but still the heart beats faintly. When it stops, then the soul is with its Judge, and the body will never stir again until the resurrection.

For these and other reasons the heart is thought to be the noblest organ of the body, and men have in all ages so esteemed it. It was the common estimation of the whole human race which a Christian patriot gave expression to when he willed his body to his native land, his *heart* to Rome,—and his soul to heaven. With the ancient Hebrews the one word meant "heart" and "mind." Many people used to think in olden times that the soul of man dwelt in his heart.

And even nowadays, when it is the common opinion that the soul does not dwell in the heart alone but is present in the whole body, we still at times use the word "heart" in a symbolical sense to denote the soul. We say "I love him with all my heart" when what we chiefly mean is "I love him with all my soul." We say "I am heartily glad," "My heart rejoices." Sometimes in our common language we still make the heart the chief seat of love and hatred, of joy and sorrow. When we think of the soul as the principle of intelligence and of thought and reason, we call it the "mind;" but when we think of it as the principle of will and of the affections and passions, we often call it the "heart."

In this twofold sense then, literal and figurative, the sacred Heart of Jesus is the object of our adoration. Those who foster this grand devotion, adore the fleshy, material heart of our Saviour, while at the same time, under the symbolical name of "heart," they worship His human soul, inasmuch as that soul was the seat of His sorrows and of His virtues and of His tender, longing, burning love for human-kind.

They adore the Heart of Jesus, as it beat with the faint, warm pulse of infancy in the crib at Bethlehem and in the arms of holy Mary. They adore the Heart which sent the Precious Blood pulsing out through His arteries and received it back from His sacred veins during the thirty-three years of His mortal life. They adore the Heart which almost broke with the shame and grief and terrible pain of the cruel passion,—which for our sake throbbed in the death-agony for three long hours, from twelve at noon until three in the evening, upon the cross. They adore the Heart which was stilled at last when He said "'It is consummated' and bowing His head-----gave up the ghost" (JOHN, XIX., 30.), which afterwards was pierced by the spear, which lay cold and quiet during the three days in the sepulchre. They adore the Heart which took new life to itself on the bright morning of the Resurrection. They adore the Heart that is in heaven now, where the glorified human body of our Saviour, united for all eternity with His soul and divinity, is seated "at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead." They try to make reparation for injuries and insults to that sacred Heart, which is in the tabernacle day and night in the midst of a cold, half-believing, shamefully indifferent and shamefully ungrateful world, waiting and longing for our prayers and adoration. And they strive to love that Heart, which has never once beat, from the beginning until now, except with love and sympathy and tenderest pity for men and women.

And He, the Lord of this sacred heart, as truly man as He is truly God, as truly one *of* us as He is one *with* the Father and the Holy Ghost,—He, we may be sure, is pleased with our humble devotion to His sacred Heart, and He

will certainly commend and reward it. For He calls us to Him today, even as He called those who labored and were burdened long ago. If we do our best to learn of Him Whose Heart is meek and humble,—if we strive to awaken ourselves, to warm ourselves up, to make our hearts burn with love for Him,—in so far at least we shall be obeying His call and going where He beckons us. In so far we will heed His loving invitation. And we will share, let us trust, in the eternal sweetness of His promises: “Come to Me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you. Take up My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart: and you shall find rest to your souls. For My yoke is sweet and My burden light.”

LI.—SAINT KILIAN.

(HIS FEAST—JULY 8th.)

TODAY we celebrate the feast of the glorious bishop and martyr, St. Kilian. He is the titular of our church and the patron-saint of our parish. From him our church and parish take their name; and it is under his protection and trusting in his intercession with God, that our church and parish carry on their little share of the grand work of Christ.

The Breviary says about him that "this saint fought even to the death for the law of his God, and did not fear the threats of the impious." For St. Kilian is one of those glorious ones who shed their blood for Christ. He is high up in heaven now in the vast and shining army of victorious martyrs, who have "come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (APOC., VII., 14.). "They are before the throne of God," says the Sacred Scripture, "and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He That sitteth on the throne, shall dwell over them. They shall no more hunger nor thirst, neither shall the sun fall on them nor any heat. For the Lamb, Which is in the midst of the throne, shall rule them, and shall lead them to the fountains of the waters of life; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (APOC., VII., 15-17.).

Twelve-hundred years of human history lie between our times and the times of St. Kilian. He was born in Ireland in the golden age of Ireland's learning and sanctity, one-hundred years and more after St. Patrick converted that country to the Christian faith, and nearly five-hundred years before Ireland had lost her national independence. It was in the seventh century, when the rest of Europe, save in certain small spots, was buried in darkness and ignorance and covered with almost continual wars and bloodshed, and when Ireland, enjoying her four long centuries of comparative peace and prosperity, did much to preserve for the world the learning and culture of better times.

People who limit their reading to novels and magazines and the news-paper-stuff of our day, will naturally know very little about the history and the glories of the past; but scholars of every creed and nation willingly acknowledge the debt of gratitude which the whole world owes to the Ireland of those ancient days.

Large universities were flourishing on Irish soil, to which students in hundreds came for instruction from England and the Continent; and from the overflowing monasteries which St. Patrick and his disciples had founded, Irish mis-

sionaries poured out to preach the Cross and spread the civilization of Christ in other lands.

St. Kilian, living in those times, was not only Irish by birth, but also Irish by blood and race. In fact he belonged to one of the noblest families of his day. As he approached the years of manhood, wealth and worldly honours and worldly pleasures were before him in abundance if he cared to grasp them. Whatever this world could give, might be his, if he chose to take it. He might be a ruling chief on his family estates, or a distinguished soldier in the armies of his country, or a councilor at the court of his king.

But Kilian made a wiser choice. The Spirit of God called him to religion, and hastening to follow his vocation, he abandoned his home and turned his back forever upon this world and its ambitions. He entered a monastery and begged to be received as a novice. He doffed his rich garments for the coarse cassock of a monk, renounced his noble family for the poor but holy society of the cloister, and gave up accustomed comforts and luxuries for the plain and simple monastery-life with its fasting, study, work and prayer.

Then when he had heard his call and obeyed it, God was greatly pleased with him, and God's graces rapidly increased in his soul. He advanced in virtue and grew holier and more learned day by day, until in a few years he had become not only a great scholar, but also a great saint.

Kilian was still a young man, although he had been elected the abbot of his monastery, when he felt called to preach the Gospel in Germany. It was one hundred years before the time of Charlemagne; and Germany, or what we now name Germany, although an extensive country, was a disunited one. Some parts of it were already converted to Christianity, but there were other regions of it, where Christ's holy name had never been heard nor His religion ever preached. Thus the duchy of Franconia, which covered the northern part of what is now Bavaria and extended besides into Baden, Saxony and Würtemberg, was still buried in paganism; and thither St. Kilian made his way, taking with him a number of his monks.

First however he visited Rome to receive his commission and authority from Pope Conon. That pontiff not only warmly welcomed the saint, but consecrated him a bishop, blessed his labours, and solemnly sent him forth to teach "all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things" whatsoever Christ had commanded (MATT., XXVIII., 19-20); and Kilian departed from Rome burning with zeal to spread the gospel and the faith of Christ.

Würzburg, then the capital of Franconia, and now one of Germany's greatest cities, became the see of St. Kilian; and from that city he made his missionary journeys here and there throughout the length and breadth of the vast

duchy. He preached Christ Crucified, and strengthened his preaching by the miracles which he worked and the holiness of his life. He laboured long and strenuously in his chosen field, and with such splendid success, that from the reigning duke himself down to the humblest of his subjects, the vast bulk of the country's population was already Christian through his efforts, when he closed his grand life-work by a glorious martyrdom.

As in the case of St. John the Baptist, it was a wicked woman who brought about St. Kilian's death. The saint had separated her from her husband's brother with whom she was living in sin; and therefore she hated him and plotted his destruction. The times were lawless, and as this woman was rich and powerful, she had little difficulty in finding assassins who would work her will. The saint was at prayer with two of his companions, when these hired ruffians entered with drawn swords. They saw the assassins approaching, yet they continued praying. St. Kilian merely spoke to his companions those words of our Divine Saviour: "Fear not them that kill the body and are not able to kill the soul, but rather fear him that can destroy both soul and body in hell" (MATT., X., 28.). And thus kneeling, as they were, the intrepid martyrs bowed their heads beneath the sword and gave their blood for Christ.

It was long centuries ago; and yet, as the Apostle of Franconia, St. Kilian is still invoked and venerated. Germany ranks him, with St. Boniface and St. Adalbert, among her national apostles, the holy missionaries who first brought to German lands the light and the love of Christ. Four great cathedrals still bear his name at Würzburg, Bamberg, Padelborn and Prague. Hundreds of shrines, holy wells, wayside crucifixes and ancient oak-trees still mark the historic spots which he passed or where he rested in his missionary journeys. More than a hundred churches, of which St. Kilian is the patron, are scattered here and there through German cities. And in 1890, when Catholic Germany was celebrating the twelfth centennial of St. Kilian's martyrdom, as many as forty thousand pilgrims gathered in Würzburg to seek his prayers and do him honour.

It was on the 8th. of July, 690, that St. Kilian was beheaded for the faith. Twelve-hundred years have passed away, and still is his intercession sought for and still is his memory revered. Ireland honours him because he was one of her own, Irish in birth and blood and education. Germany honours him as one of her sainted pioneers of the Gospel, who threw open for all time to her sons and daughters the everlasting gates of heaven. The entire Christian world honours him, for he is a saint of the universal Church.

Let us not forget him, whose church and parish are under his special protection and patronage. "St. Kilian, pray for us," should be one of our short but fervent ejaculations every time that we kneel here in St. Kilian's Church.

Thus let us often pray to St. Kilian. And may that renowned bishop and martyr, where he reigns above in his everlasting glory, pray often to God for us. May he help us, at the regular Sunday Mass and in the sacraments of our holy religion and in all church affairs and parish business, to be more and more firmly united as a parish as time goes on,—united with our fellow-parishioners, and above all united with our pastor whom God has placed over us. May he help us not only to save our individual souls, which is the first and chief thing, but also, secondarily, to work and give, cheerfully and generously, each one according to his means, towards erecting and beautifying the parish-church which will bear his name for centuries to come. May he aid us to prefer our religion above all the honours and pleasures and riches of this world, as he preferred it; to place the glory and the laws of God higher than our life and life-blood, as he placed them; so that having benefitted by his intercession here on earth, we may rejoice in his company in the kingdom of heaven.

LII.—SACRIFICE.

“Seven days shalt thou purify the altar and sanctify it, and it shall be most holy.-----And there will I command the children of Israel; and the altar shall be sanctified by My glory-----And I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel, and will be their God” (EXOD., XXIX., 37., 43., 45.).

ALTAAR, sacrifice, and priest,—these are three ideas that always go together. The altar only exists for sacrifice; and sacrifice can be offered only by a priest. Therefore on this day of the dedication of your most magnificent altar let us spend a few moments in meditating on sacrifice.

Sacrifice is the centre of religion. True religion has always had and will always have its sacrifice, as the great central action of its outward worship and ritual.

In the Old Law the sacrifice of the paschal lamb was the chief religious event of the Jewish year; and in the New Law Christian worship and ritual revolve and will ever revolve about the holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

The centre of all religion, past, present and future, was the great Sacrifice of the Cross. All the sacrifices of all the centuries before Christ, were merely “shadows of the good things to come” (HEBR., X., 1.). merely feeble types and figures of the Sacrifice of Mount Calvary. All the sacrifices of all the ages since Christ,—all the holy Masses which have been or are yet to be celebrated to the end of time, in so many different regions and countries, in various churches and chapels, on so many altars, by so many different priests,—are repetitions of that Sacrifice of the Cross, in which the selfsame Priest and Victim, Jesus Christ our Lord, offers himself to the Father, applying to our souls the merits and graces which He won for us on Calvary. So that even as sacrifice is the centre of all religion, so the Sacrifice of the Cross is the centre of all sacrifices.

Now there is never a sacrifice without an altar and a priest. And this is one reason why the priest in religious matters is the leader of his people, and why the altar will always be the most important, the most prominent, and the most beautiful object in the church.

Three-thousand-and-four-hundred years ago God laid the command upon Moses to sanctify His altar. And Moses at the head of the Chosen People obeyed the commandment, and for seven days purified and sanctified the altar,

anointing it with holy oil very much as a bishop does nowadays, and dedicating it to God's service.

The altar which Moses dedicated, was not oblong like ours, but square in shape,—eight feet, or five cubits, square. It was made of precious setim-wood but sheathed with brass. Heavy metal rings were fastened to it, through which strong bars might be passed horizontally on either side; because by means of these bars it had to be carried from place to place during those wanderings of the Chosen People towards the Promised Land. And all about this altar of holocausts were cauldrons and fire-pans and pans to receive the ashes of the victims, tongs and flesh-hooks; and a grate in its centre with a hearth beneath it; and at its corners four strong horns or pyramids to which the victims might be tied. Because animals were the victims of the old dispensation, sacrificed to the true God in Israel, even as they were offered to false gods in Egypt and Greece and Rome: oxen and sheep, the paschal lamb, the lambs of the daily sacrifice:—figures and prophetic emblems foreshadowing through all the ages that perfect and all sufficing Sacrifice on Calvary, where “the Lamb of God, Who taketh away the sins of the world” (JOHN, I., 29.) shed His sacred blood upon the cross:— figures and emblems also of the clean and unbloody daily Sacrifice of the Mass, where that same Lamb of God, offering Himself at the altar to His eternal Father, applies so often to our souls the merits and graces which He purchased for us on Calvary.

“And it came to pass,” the Book of Numbers tells us, “that when Moses had finished the tabernacle, these were the offerings made by the princes of Israel in the dedication of the altar, in the day wherein it was consecrated: twelve dishes of silver: twelve silver bowls: twelve little mortars of gold:—that is,-----two-thousand-four-hundred shekels (of silver) by the weight of the sanctuary (and) a-hundred-and-twenty shekels of gold.-----These things were offered in the dedication of the altar, when it was anointed” (NUMB., VII., 84-88.).

We see how generous the princes of the tribes were on that day of the dedication of their altar; and, what is more to the purpose perhaps, we see that altars were dedicated in the only true religion of three-thousand years ago, just as altars are dedicated in the only true religion of today. But between those times and ours there is this one great difference: that not only the true religion, but even the false religions of those ancient times, had their altars and sacrifices; whereas the false religions of our day have neither the one nor the other. You might leave your home this morning and travel through the length and breadth of our country, and you would find neither priest nor sacrifice nor altar save in the Catholic Church. In the meeting-house there is a reading-desk or a so-called communion-table, where the altar stands in

the church. Of course altars exist only for sacrifice, and sacrifice is offered only by priests: now the false religions of our day do not even claim to have priests, and with some few small exceptions they deny the very existence of sacrifice; therefore they have no use for altars.

But in Christ's religion there is a sacrifice still, the daily Sacrifice of the Mass. In every Catholic church and chapel there are altars now, as there were altars in the time of our Divine Saviour, and for thousands of years before His time. And even as the altar of holocausts three-thousand-and-four-hundred years ago was dedicated by Moses, the great Leader of the Chosen People, so this very morning your loved and honoured Bishop dedicated this most beautiful altar of your truly splendid church. "And it shall be most holy." And so long as this solid edifice stands, that is, for hundreds of years to come, here will God "command the children of Israel, and the altar shall be sanctified by His glory. And He will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel, and will be their God."

Earthly things may pass away, but the words of Scripture and the religion of Christ are sure to remain. And inseparable from religion is sacrifice. There never was and never will be true religion without its altars. For there were sacrifice and altars all through the ages of the past; and so also in the future—governments will rise and fall; schools will flourish and perish; "men may come and men may go;" men's fashions and fads of science and of religion may bloom and fade;—but the divine Sacrifice of the Mass, the great central Action of our holy religion, is sure to go on forever. In this sense also, as well as in other true senses, our Divine Saviour, both Victim and Priest on the Cross and at the Mass alike, could truly say: "I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (MATT., XXVIII., 20.). Hear the royal prophet chanting the praises of this eternal Priest one-thousand years before His holy birth: "The Lord said to my Lord: 'Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thy enemies Thy footstool.' The Lord will send forth the sceptre of Thy power out of Sion: 'Rule Thou in the midst of Thy enemies. With Thee is the principality, in the day of Thy strength, in the brightness of the saints: from the womb before the day star I begot Thee.' The Lord hath sworn, and He will not repent: 'Thou art a Priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech'" (Ps., CIX., 1-4.).

And even as He is truly "a high priest forever" (HEBR., VI., 20.), so shall His great Sacrifice be daily renewed upon earth to the end of all the ages. Always in the temples of true religion the altar will be the most prominent object. All eyes will turn towards the altar, all heads shall bow to it, all knees will bend before it. Even as the shepherd is the centre of his flock, and the priest of his people, so the altar is the great centre of the church, and so the Sacrifice is the great central action of outward worship.

Such it has been from the beginning of time. "Abel was a shepherd and Cain a husbandman," the Book of Genesis tells us. "Cain offered of the fruits of the earth gifts to the Lord. Abel also offered of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat" (GEN., IV., 2-4.). Now Cain and Abel of course were the eldest children of the first man and woman, and this text of Genesis indicates to us how early in the world's history the outward worship of the true God began to center itself about sacrifice. Much later than this the deluge raged and subsided; and immediately after leaving the ark "Noah built an altar unto the Lord, and taking of all cattle and fowls that were clean, offered holocausts upon the altar" (GEN., VIII., 20.). Abraham, Isaac and Jacob likewise built altars and sacrificed to God. And from Moses' times down, to the day of the great Sacrifice on Mount Calvary, sacrifice was a divine institution of the only true religion;—from the time of Moses the true religion had its regular *daily* sacrifices, a lamb at morning and a lamb in the evening, besides the larger oblations at yearly festivals and on special occasions.

Even the tribes and peoples which fell away from the true religion during those early millenia, made sacrifice the central action of their worship. The most ancient books that have come down to us, prove this. The dolmens and cromlechs, the inscriptions on stone and metal, the clay-tablets of Niniveh and the altar-mounds unearthed by archaeologists in various places, all make it perfectly clear that sacrifice was as common with the false religions as with the true religion of the most ancient times. Rome and Greece and Egypt and Babylonia all offered victims regularly to their false divinities. So that we are able to say that from the very beginning of the world there has scarcely been a religion without its sacrifice. Sacrifice is almost as old as prayer.

For man came forth from Paradise in shame and sorrow, with full knowledge of his sinfulness and degradation and a lively sense of his nothingness in the presence of God. He realized then, more vividly even than now, the infinite perfection, the supreme majesty of the Creator. Then, even more truly than now, the man who could continually hide his soul and repress his feelings,—the man who could always love without showing it and always reverence and adore without ever expressing it,—would not be human at all, but rather a freak of nature. Hence man felt the necessity of acknowledging God's majesty and dominion, not only in his inmost soul, but also by outward actions. He felt the need of offering visible adoration to the Divinity. There was primitive revelation too, concerning which our positive knowledge is very little. And thus outward religion had its beginning on this earth. Man prostrated himself before God. He mortified himself, he humbled himself to the earth, remembering his sin and his moral wretchedness. He conversed about the great Creator. He chanted hymns in His honour, and adored and prayed. And best of all, he began to offer sacrifice.

Sacrifice is the very summit of adoration. It is the highest action of exterior worship,—higher far than self-affliction, prostrations, ceremonies, chantings or prayer. It is mankind's visible and public acknowledgement of God's supreme majesty, of God's supreme dominion over life and death. No matter how we repress ourselves, our emotions will come to the surface. What we intensely feel, will struggle into outward expression. And thus fallen and sullied man, having the light of reason still and the fire of love beneath all his contemptible smallness,—gifted, notwithstanding his insignificance, with a mind that can see and a heart that can feel and an immortal soul,—fallen and sullied man cannot fail, whenever he is in a sane and normal condition, to express by outward actions his inward consciousness of God's supreme perfection, his inward sense of his own dependence, guilt and nothingness. His realization of these must be expressed outwardly, or he would die. And the highest, worthiest, noblest expression of them, is sacrifice.

And so it was that far back in the infancy of this sinful earth, man stood before God in shame and abasement. He dwelt upon the infinite greatness of God and the paltry smallness of himself; the Creator's bright purity and radiance, the creature's guilt and corruption. "Behold even the moon doth not shine and the stars are not pure in His sight; how much less man, that is rottenness, and the son of man, who is a worm!" (JOB, XXV., 5., 6.). He blushed to exist, in the dazzling light of God's bright holiness. He humbled himself, he prayed and adored. But that was not enough for him. He would go still farther. He would sacrifice himself if he might, he would pour out his own blood if he dared, he would annihilate himself if that were lawful and possible, in token of his own nothingness, and to express his vivid sense of God's greatness and majesty. But the taking of human life is murder. The taking even of one's own life is a foul and dastardly crime. And hence man brought to the altar instead, the beasts of the fields and the fowls of the air and the fruits of the earth. The fruits were burned upon the altar. The animals were slaughtered. Blood flowed and smoke arose. There was no cruelty, no torture, no lengthened agony. The brutes were only made for man's support and use. Sooner or later they would die in one way or another. And they could never die more quickly nor more painlessly than they died at the altar of sacrifice. And so their blood was shed and their lives sped forth in adoration of Him Who is the Lord of life and death. The lamb of the Pasch, the lambs of the morning and evening sacrifice, the goat of the sin-offering, the oxen and sheep of the holocaust, were sacrificed incessantly to God.

These countless sacrifices of those ancient times were only types and figures of the stupendous oblation of Mount Calvary which was to come. For "coming events cast their shadows before;" and that Event of events, the Crucifixion,

was prophetically foreshadowed over and over again by the holocausts and sin-offerings of the primitive religion and of the Jewish dispensation. At last it occurred. There on Mount Calvary, on a Friday noontime, nineteen-hundred years ago, the Sacrifice of sacrifices took place, with its Priest, divine and human, and its altar of wood, and its Victim, a man-God. The cross of Christ was not only the bed of His suffering and the throne of His triumph over the hearts of men; it was also the altar of His sacrifice. And Christ Himself was the great High Priest, "a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech." offering Himself to His eternal Father as Victim for us on the altar of the cross. "For it was fitting," St. Paul says, "that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners" (HEBR., VII., 26.). "We have such an high priest, Who is set on the right hand of the throne of majesty in the heavens" (HEBR., VIII., 1.). "And the others indeed were made many priests, because by reason of death they were not suffered to continue; but This, for that He continueth forever, hath an everlasting priesthood." (HEBR., VII., 23., 24.).

Hear the great prophet Isaiah describing this eternal High Priest, this Divine Victim, and foretelling the sufferings of our Saviour eight-hundred years before our Saviour's birth: "There is no beauty in Him nor comeliness," said the prophet-----"Despised and the most abject of men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity,-----He hath borne our weaknesses and carried our sorrows-----He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His bruises we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, every one hath turned aside into his own way: and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was offered because it was His Own will, and He opened not His mouth: He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter; and shall be dumb, as a lamb before his shearer" (Isai., LIII., 2-7.).

He was the great Peace-Offering, for with the torture and agony of His passion He made peace between sinful men and an insulted God. He was the great Sin-Offering, the "Lamb of God Who taketh away the sins of the world" (JOHN, 1., 29.), "Who His Own Self bore our sins in His body upon the tree" (I. PET., II., 24.).

He is there in the tabernacle at this moment, while I am speaking to you. He will be there night and day for all the years to come, so long as the parish exists and the church stands. Here "will He command the children of Israel; and the altar shall be sanctified by His glory-----And He will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel, and will be their God."

And even as He shall descend upon this altar Sunday after Sunday and weekday after weekday to offer for you again and again in an unbloody manner the

divine Sacrifice which He offered on Calvary in blood and agony, so may He bless this parish with its priests and people. May He help you, not only to save your individual souls, but also to carry on generously and steadily, in loyal union with the pastor whom He has placed over you, the noble work of completing and adorning this splendid temple to His honour and glory. So that while you gather here Sunday after Sunday before His altar to join with your priests in "the continual Sacrifice," the love of Him may fill your hearts more and more, and His benediction descend upon you, for life, and for death, and for eternity.

LIII.—THE ASSUMPTION.

(LADY'S DAY IN AUGUST.)

THE feast of the Assumption commemorates the close of our blessed Lady's earthly life, that is, her death; her resurrection; her assumption into heaven; and her coronation by the Most Holy Trinity as Queen of heaven and earth.

In regard to the Blessed Virgin's death,—St. Bernard thought that it was not brought about by sickness nor disease nor by extreme old age; but he considered that her death was caused simply and solely by her lonesome, longing love for her Divine Son. When He ascended into heaven, she was left behind to love and long for Him; and under the stress and strain of this great love, she gradually weakened as the years wore on, until finally her heart failed, and death ensued. What we may be certain of, is this: that in Mary's case death was not the penalty of sin; for sin had never entered into her immaculate soul.

She alone, out of the entire human race, did not fall in Adam's fall nor share in Adam's guilt. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread," God said to Adam, "till thou return to the earth, out of which thou wast taken: for dust thou art and into dust thou shalt return" (GEN., III., 19.); and this judgment upon sin applied not only to Adam, but to all of Adam's children. Mary is the one and the glorious exception. "Into dust" her virginal body did not return. She died, because even her Divine Son had died. But after death, long before her body might have mouldered "into dust," long before corruption had even breathed upon her body, she arose again from the dead.

As it was love for God which had caused her death, so it was Motherhood of God with its perfect purity of soul and body, which merited her resurrection. *Our* bodies share with our souls in the punishment of sin; because our bodies tempt our souls and help them to sin, and are even sullied and blemished themselves by the trail of the serpent. And this is one of the reasons why it is fit that our bodies should moulder into dust. But Mary was spotless in body and spotless in soul; immaculately pure from every stain of sin,—

"Purer than foam on central ocean tossed;

Brighter than eastern skies, at daybreak strewn

With fancied roses, than the unblemished moon

Before her wane begins on heaven's blue coast."

And as her immaculate body was never tarnished by sin, so neither did it ever suffer the corruption of the grave.

The

"Mother, whose virgin bosom was uncrossed
With the least shade of thought to sin allied,"

became the

"Woman, above all women glorified,
Our tainted nature's solitary boast"

and was taken up
into heaven, body and soul, immediately after her death and resurrection.

Her love for her Divine Son brought about her death; her shining purity resulted in her resurrection; so her wonderful holiness was rewarded by her assumption into heaven. Purgatory could never receive one so spotlessly holy as she was, nor could this sinful earth be a fit resting-place for her, but heaven itself must open wide its gates and myriads of bright angels escort her thither.

"So dear to heaven is saintly chastity
That, when a soul is found sincerely so,
A thousand liveried angels lackey her,
Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt."

Mary had not only chastity, but every other virtue as well, and in the highest degree in which a created being has ever possessed them. Neither angel nor saint could ever hope to be so holy as she. And hence her assumption into heaven.

And there, in those realms of happiness, God crowned her "Queen of Heaven," "Queen of Angels and Saints." She who died through her love for God, who arose from the grave through her purity, whom "liveried angels" carried up into heaven on account of her holiness, was given the highest place in heaven under God through her vast and deep humility. "Everyone that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (LUKE, XVIII., 14.). This is one of the unchangeable laws that God has laid down in His dealings with men. "Humble thyself in all things, and thou shalt find grace before God" (ECCLUS., III., 10.). The humbler and lowlier we are on earth, the higher may we hope to be in heaven. Mary could say: "My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour, because He hath regarded the lowliness of His handmaid." She could say: "He hath put down the mighty from their seat and hath exalted them of low degree." She considered herself empty of merit, and the angel hailed her "full of grace." She thought herself the least of women, but God esteemed her as the greatest by far of His created beings. She humbled herself below all, here on this earth, and God crowned her above all as Queen in the kingdom of heaven.

Let us not neglect to pray to her today and during the octave of her great feast. Let us beseech her over and over again to "pray for us sinners now

and at the hour of our death:" to obtain for us now just a little bit of her love for Jesus, her purity, her holiness, her humility; and at the hour of our death favorable judgment from her Divine Son, and the sweet peace of God, and the bright light of heaven.

LIV.—“THE EXTERIOR DARKNESS.”

MATT., XXII., 1-14.

XIX. SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

“Then the king said:-----‘Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the exterior darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen’” (MATT., XXII., 13-14).

BY “the exterior darkness” where “there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” our Divine Saviour figures for us the torments of hell, into which shall be cast all those who had not on the wedding-garment when the king went in to see his guests, but had soiled their robe of innocence by mortal sin and not cleansed it again by repentance. It isn’t a pleasant subject either to think of or to speak about. But let us often think of it nevertheless with reverence and fear, and humbly ask God to deliver us from the everlasting fire. “Let us go down to hell during our life,” says St. Augustine, “that we may not go down there after our death.” It will be a million times better for us to meditate upon hell here, than to fall into it hereafter.

“Take heed that no man seduce you,” our Saviour said. There are men and women, wandering about outside of the Church in moral and mental darkness, who seem to find it hard to believe that everlasting punishment should be waiting for anybody in the next world. But that proves nothing. There are condemned and sentenced murderers in their cells today who find it very hard to believe that they will be hanged tomorrow morning; and yet their hanging isn’t any less certain on that account. We ourselves, enjoying good health and spirits as most of us are at this moment, will some day be stretched upon a bed of sickness and pain; it is difficult for us either to believe or to realize it, feeling as we do just now,—but that will not prevent it from coming to pass; someday or other either a grievous sickness or a sudden death will surely come to us.

Even if God had made no revelation,—even if we had neither a Church nor a Bible,—our own unaided reason might inform us that there will be a place or state of punishment in the future life. For our reason tells us that there is a God, and that He would not be God if He were not just; our reason tells us that God is just, “a rewarder to them that seek Him” (HEBR., XI., 6.), a punisher as well to those who despise Him; that He neither rewards nor

punishes adequately in this life; and that He will therefore fully reward and fully punish in a future life. "Whether we be Greeks or Jews, heretics or Christians," said St. John Chrysostom, "we all alike admit that God is just. Now many persons who have sinned greatly, depart from this life unpunished; and on the other hand, many who have lived virtuously, only pass away after having suffered a thousand calamities. If God is just, where will these latter receive their reward, where will the former be given their punishment, unless there is a hell, unless there is a resurrection?"

"Take heed that no man seduce you." A perfect God must be a just God. The justice of God is one of His perfections. It is true that God is merciful, but it is also true that God is just. God's Mercy is infinite, we know; but we also know that God's Justice is infinite. God is our Father; He is not a father who spoils his children by too much kindness,—who is all kindness and weakness without any authority or control over them,—but He is a Father Who is strict and kind, just and merciful, at one and the same time. If all that He has done for us does not entice us to be good, His justice at least must punish us for being wicked. And at the dreadful judgment the sentence of those who have been wicked and who have obstinately persisted and died in their wickedness, will be pronounced in those words of Holy Writ: "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels" (MATT., XXV., 41.).

It is our Divine Lord Himself, our meek and most merciful Saviour, Who has fully and seriously warned us of this terrible sentence. It was He Himself Who spoke those words to His disciples in the midst of a solemn description of the last dreadful judgment-day. When He "was sitting upon Mount Olivet, the disciples came to Him privately, saying: 'Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming and of the consummation of the world?' And Jesus answering said to them: 'Take heed that no man seduce you'" (MATT., XXIV., 3-4.), and in language mysterious and yet clear enough for His purpose He went on to foretell to them the abomination of desolation and the other signs that shall come before the last judgment. Then He came to the event itself and spoke of that terrible consummation. "When the Son of Man shall come in His majesty," He said, "and all the angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the seat of His majesty: and all nations shall be gathered together before Him, and He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats; and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on His left. Then shall the King say to them that shall be on His right hand: 'Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me to drink; I

was a stranger, and you received Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.' Then shall the just answer Him, saying: 'Lord, when did we see Thee hungry, and fed Thee; thirsty, and gave Thee drink? And when did we see Thee a stranger, and received Thee in; or naked, and clothed Thee? Or when did we see Thee sick or in prison, and came to Thee?' And the King answering shall say to them: 'Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these My least brethern, you did it to Me.' Then He shall say to them also that shall be on His left hand "Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels'.-----And these shall go into everlasting punishment: but the just into life everlasting" (MATT., XXV., 31-46.).

Therefore let us often remember these "four last things," death and judgment, heaven and hell. Because hell is as certain as heaven. Hell is as eternal as everlasting as heaven. Our Divine Saviour, as we have just now seen, mentions in one breath the everlasting life and the everlasting punishment: "These shall go into everlasting punishment: but the just into life everlasting."

We know well that no man nor woman nor child will ever fall into the everlasting punishment save by his own free and deliberate choice. The Creator has given us a free-will with which to choose between good and evil, between right and wrong, between eternal happiness and eternal misery. "God hath set water and fire before thee; stretch forth thy hand to which thou wilt. Before man is life and death.-----That which he shall choose, shall be given to him" (ECCLUS., XV., 17-18.).

The lost soul was free to choose at every moment of his mortal life, just as we are free to choose now and at every moment of our lives. He chose death, he chose fire. Let us humbly beg of God that He will grant *us* the grace to choose more wisely, so that we may never be cast into "the exterior darkness" where "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

LV.—DRUNKENNESS.

EPHES., V., 15-21.

(XX. SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.)

“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is luxury;
but be ye filled with the Holy Spirit” (EPHES., V., 18.)

BY these words of today's epistle we are warned against the sin of drunkenness. It is no human tongue which addresses this warning to us, nor any mere man who speaks it; it is God Himself Who through the inspired letter of St. Paul solemnly pronounces those words: “Be not drunk with wine, wherein is luxury; but be ye filled with the Holy Spirit.”

Let us spend a few moments today in considering two great reasons why we should rather die than be guilty of this crime: first, because drunkenness is gluttony; and secondly, because drunkenness is mortal sin.

There are seven capital vices, pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy and sloth, which work so much misery in this world and directly or indirectly drag so many souls down to hell, that they are called the seven capital sins, and sometimes the seven chief sources of sin. The fifth of these is gluttony. Gluttony is the inordinate or excessive use of food or drink. It is the *excessive* use of food or drink; because a moderate use of them, free from all excess, is of course no sin whatever. Now there are two kinds of gluttony. The first kind consists in the excessive use of food or of such drink as is not intoxicating. The second kind of gluttony consists in the excessive use of intoxicating drink; and this is what we commonly call drunkenness.

I need not describe it to you. It has become such a common crime, is so often committed and so poorly hidden, that everyone has seen specimens of it on the public streets. And certainly anyone who has ever seen a drunken man or a drunken woman, and who has had human feeling enough and pride enough in his race to be disgusted by the sight, will admit that drunkenness is the vilest, most brutal and most debasing kind of gluttony.

The drunkard is always a glutton, always a selfish worshipper of his own lowest nature, his own beastliest appetites and cravings. “Many there are,” says the Apostle, “of whom I have told you often (and now tell you weeping) that they are enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction; whose God is their belly; and whose glory is in their shame” (PHIL., III., 18-19).

Among these gluttons thus described, the man or woman who gives way to drunkenness, is certainly to be numbered. The drunkard's "end is destruction, his God is his belly, his glory is in his shame." Of all gluttons in the whole world he is the most utterly degraded and the most intensely selfish.

Even when he flatters himself, for the moment, that he is generous and open-handed, what he calls generosity is in reality selfishness in disguise. For example, when he spends a week's wages in a Saturday night's carousal and "treats" his friends lavishly (with money very often which his family is in bitter need of), there is no generosity in that. It is for himself that he does it all. He hopes to be "treated" in return, he needs company for the enjoyment of his revels, or is actuated by some other selfish motive.

Generosity would be to part with something, to make a sacrifice, for the sake of some one else. But the drunkard makes no sacrifice for the sake of anyone else. Whatever he does, is for his own sake, and to gratify, not his soul nor mind, but the filthiest animal cravings of his body. For as drunkenness is the lowest form of gluttony, so the drunkard, being a true glutton, cares for nothing outside of himself,—neither for God, nor family, nor friends.

Here is the first reason then why we should rather die than be guilty of this crime: namely, that drunkenness is gluttony and that, being gluttony, it would lower us to the level of the brutes, would destroy that image of God which was created in every human being, and leave instead the image of a hog swilling in its sty.

But the second reason why we ought to prefer death to drunkenness, is more convincing still. It is that drunkenness is mortal sin. As being gluttony, this vice lowers men to the level of the brutes; but as being mortal sin, it places them lower still; it brings them down into the deepest depths of the fallen angels and the lost souls in hell.

You have heard the words "mortal sin" often, and you know their meaning well. A mortal sin is no slight venial fault, displeasing God without deeply offending Him, and deserving to be punished only by the temporal flames of purgatory. A mortal sin is a grievous offence against the law of God, and against God Himself. It offends God so deeply, that the guilty soul no longer enjoys His friendship; from the moment in which the grievous sin is wilfully and deliberately committed, the guilty soul becomes God's enemy; if it should be called to its account at that moment, or afterwards while the offence is still unforgiven, it will be cast into the fire of hell, it will burn there forever and ever even for one unforgiven mortal sin.

Now it is not one mortal sin which the drunkard is likely to commit, but twenty and a hundred. If he drinks such a quantity as will deprive him of the use of reason, so that he no longer knows what he is doing, nor can distin-

guish right from wrong, nor remember the next morning what he said or did over night, that is always a mortal sin. Even though he deprive himself of the use of reason for only one hour, even though it be at home or in some spot where nobody can see him, he commits a mortal sin. If he deliberately drinks such a quantity of liquor as he knows will deprive him of the use of reason, and then goes to sleep before the liquor obtains its effect, it is still a mortal sin. If a person knows from past experience that he is going to become thoroughly intoxicated every time that he frequents certain company or enters certain places, then he commits a mortal sin by going with that company and by entering those places, unless some very serious reason should oblige him (with proper precautions) to do so. If the father and mother of a family are seen often by their children staggering or acting foolishly under the influence of drink, they are guilty of a mortal sin of scandal, even though they retain the use of reason at such times and know what they are doing. If a person encourages and "presses" his companions to drink, with the deliberate intention of getting them thoroughly intoxicated, or even with the knowledge that they are going to become thus intoxicated, this is also a mortal sin. If anyone while beginning to drink recollects from past experience that whenever he becomes intoxicated he is likely to talk blasphemously against God and religion, or to be impure in thought, words or action, or to be cruel towards his family, and then while recollecting this continues drinking, he is responsible, not only for his drunkenness, but also for the sins of blasphemy, impurity and cruelty which he may unknowingly commit during his drunkenness. And if a man, without ever going so far as to deprive himself of the use of reason by drink, should yet regularly spend so much money on it as to leave himself unable to pay his just debts or to support his family decently, he also is guilty of mortal sin.

These are a few out of the multitudes of mortal sins which a drunkard is likely to commit, any one of which would hurl his wretched soul into everlasting fire if he should die before obtaining forgiveness for it. It is no wonder then that the Church urges us so often and so constantly to restrain ourselves from this terrible vice, and that the Holy Ghost Himself by the inspired pen of St. Paul should solemnly warn us in the epistle of today's Mass: "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is luxury; but be ye filled with the Holy Ghost."

No one who is devoured by the spirit of drunkenness, can be filled with the Holy Spirit. The spirit of drunkenness will leave no room in a person's soul for the Spirit of God. The drunkard chooses intoxication in preference to God. He makes a deliberate choice. He is free, like every other man. He may be powerfully tempted, but he is never forced; and while he possesses the use of reason, he can have grace, or help from God, sufficient to overcome the

temptation, if he will only ask for it and use it. He is perfectly free, as we all are, to choose between good and evil, between God and God's bitter enemy. And he chooses intoxication in preference to God.

It is only for a few hours at a time that he makes his choice, because he knows that the pleasures of drink will last no longer than that; but if it were in his power, he might make the same choice forever and ever. When he sits at home tippling, or stands at the "bar" drinking glass after glass, or staggers from one "saloon" to another becoming less manly and more beastly at every step, then he is enjoying the choice which he has made; and if he could go on thus eternally, and the sluggish drunken sleep would not interrupt his enjoyment; and if the wild intoxication with the heart beating at double speed and the blood boiling through his veins, would last forever and ever,—he would still choose it, he would be perfectly satisfied, and would ask for no other heaven and no other God than the drunken happiness of that moment.

Thus the drunkard chooses intoxication in preference to God. And having deliberately made his choice against God, it would not be strange if he should remain for all eternity separated from God. He has turned his back upon God forever and ever, so far as it was in his power to do so; and he will burn forever and ever if he should perish in his sin.

"Do not err," the Sacred Scriptures tell us; "neither fornicators nor idolaters nor adulterers-----nor drunkards----shall possess the kingdom of God" (I. COR., II., 9-10). "Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim-----staggering with wine! Behold the Lord is mighty and strong; as a storm of hail, a destroying whirlwind; as the violence of many waters overflowing and sent forth upon a spacious land!" (ISAIAH, XXVIII., 1-2.). "Woe to him that giveth drink to his friend-----and maketh him drunk!" (HABAC., II., 15.). "For as thorns embrace one another, so while they are feasting and drinking together, they shall be consumed, like stubble that is fully dry" (NAHUM, I., 10.).

And therefore let us make *our* choice forever and ever against drunkenness. Because it is gluttony, but most of all because it is mortal sin, let us be resolved rather to die than to be guilty of it. Let us choose never during our whole lives to yield to it,—never, at any time, in any place, under any circumstances. For it is unworthy of us, whether we think of ourselves as reasoning men or as believing Christians. For we "are the children of light and children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep, as others do; but let us watch, and be sober. For they that are sleeping, are sleeping in the night; and they that are drunk, are drunk in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, having on the breastplate of faith and charity, and for a helmet the hope of salvation" (I. THESS., V., 5-8.).

LVI.—FORGIVENESS.

MATT., XVIII., 23-35.

(XXI. SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.)

THIS gospel teaches us our duty of forgiving those who trespass against us. St. Peter had asked our Saviour: “‘Lord, how often shall my brother offend against me and I forgive him? Till seven times?’ Jesus saith to him: ‘I say not to thee till seven times; but till seventy times seven times’” (MATT., XVIII., 21-22); thus showing us clearly that we must never grow tired of forgiving our brother, nor ever imagine that a time has come when we shall forgive him no more.

Of course our Divine Lord is not speaking of those who have charge of others and are in authority over them; because these are not always allowed to forgive, but must sometimes punish. Thus the parent is bound in certain cases to punish his children. Yet even when parents correct their children, it is not trespasses against themselves which they are correcting, but trespasses against God, Whom they represent, and against His commandments.

With people in general however the case is different. They must never punish their private wrongs, but must always forgive them even as they hope themselves to be forgiven.

It is true that a Christian may defend himself; but there's a great difference between defending oneself from injury, before being injured, and revenging oneself after being injured.

It is true also that even after being injured a Christian may in certain extreme cases seek justice from the courts and from the proper authorities. But he must never take revenge into his own hands, nor do evil nor even wish evil to others because they have done evil to him. And if his fellow-man has seriously injured him either in body, goods or reputation, and he appeals to the proper authorities for justice, even then he must not take such action for the sake of revenge, nor in hatred, nor with the mere motive of injuring his fellow-man even as he has been injured by him; but simply in order to obtain back his rights which his neighbor has deprived him of; or for the public good, that is, that justice and order may be preserved, that the laws may be obeyed, and that, while others are deterred from crime by his example, the criminal himself may be improved and benefitted by his punishment. If murderers, thieves, slanderers and other criminals were allowed to go without any punish-

ment, then civilized society itself with the many blessings which it brings to soul and body, could not long exist. Hence it may sometimes be even an act of virtue to assist society in ferreting out crime and in bringing the criminal to justice.

Yet justice should always be tempered with mercy, and even where there is public punishment, there must be private forgiveness. On the other hand in those much more common cases of purely private offences, where there is no great injury and no question of public punishment,—in all those cases a Christian should forgive and forgive and again and again forgive. “Not seven times,” our Divine Saviour said to St. Peter, “but seventy times seven times.” Even as God has so many times forgiven us, so must we everyone forgive his brother from his heart. Now it was to illustrate this great truth that our Lord told the parable of today’s gospel.

A certain petty king or noble had many servants, and one of the these owed him a very large sum of money. It was in the rough old times before Christianity had begun to civilize the world, when a man might be sold into slavery for his debts if he could not pay them otherwise. The laws were actually so strict and inhuman in many countries in those days, that when a person could not collect the money that was due to him in any other way, he was allowed to raise it by selling into slavery not only his debtor, but even his debtor’s wife and children.

So this king summoned to his presence the servant who owed him money, and at first when he found that he could not pay, he ordered him and his wife and children as well, with all his property and belongings, to be sold; but afterwards, moved by the servant’s prayers and tears, he pitied him, and not only granted him his freedom, but forgave him all the debt.

Then this servant, who must have been a very contemptible sort of a fellow, going out from the King’s presence, happened to meet one of his fellow-servants, weaker and lower down in life than himself, who owed him a very small sum of money. And instead of treating his fellow mercifully as he himself had just been treated, instead of remembering the forgiveness which he himself had just received, he throttled his fellow-servant like the tyrant and bully that he was, catching him by the throat and choking him and shouting out to him all the time: “Pay what thou owest;” neither would he grant him the least delay no matter how pitifully the poor man begged for it, but had him committed to prison on the instant and held there till his debt was paid.

Shortly afterwards all this was reported to the king. And when the king heard about the heartless conduct of this wretch towards his fellow, he summoned him back into his presence and bitterly upbraided him. “Thou wicked

servant," he said, "I forgave thee all the debt, because thou besoughtest me: shouldst not thou then have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had compassion on thee?" And his lord, being angry, delivered him to the torturers until he paid all the debt. So also shall My heavenly Father do to you," our Saviour said in concluding the story, "if you forgive not every-one his brother from your hearts."

And this is the moral of the parable. Certainly God has forgiven us far more than that petty king forgave his servant and far more than we will ever have a chance to forgive one another; for there can be no comparison whatever between our sins against God and the little injuries or the little offences of other men and women against us. And therefore, unless we wish to be more heartless and contemptible than that base servant in the parable, we must ever be merciful and forgiving towards those who trespass against us.

We must keep our hearts entirely free from hatred, from ill-will, from every deliberate desire of revenge or of evil to others. In one word we must love others with Christian charity. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," our Saviour commanded (MATT., XXII., 39.); and we should note that even if a man has offended or injured us, he does not cease on that account to be our neighbor. He is still a child of God, still a member of our human race, with human body and human soul and human nature. Even our worst enemies have in them the image and likeness of God, and are truly "our neighbor" whom we must love. "Love your enemies," our Saviour said; "I say to you: Love your enemies: do good to them that hate you: ('bless them that curse you'): and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you: that you may be the children of your Father Who is in heaven, Who maketh His sun to rise upon the good and the bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust" (MATT., V., 44-45). (and LUKE). Hence we must love and wish well to our enemies even as we must love and wish well to all mankind.

Of course we are not commanded to be intimate friends with all mankind, because that would be impossible. Our friends and our comrades we are always free to choose. All cannot be our familiar acquaintances nor our daily companions nor our intimate friends. Yet while free to bestow our acquaintance and friendship where and on whom we please, we are commanded to feel Christian charity and sincere good-will for all without exception.

Therefore our Divine Lord made no exception of our enemies nor of those who have injured us when He taught us to say "*Our* Father Who art in heaven," remembering that God is the common Father of our entire race; "Give us this day our daily bread," praying not for ourselves alone, but for all mankind as well; nor when He bade us ever beseech Him to "forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."

And what are we, let us ask ourselves, who have so often ourselves offended others and so horribly offended God,—what are we after all, to withhold forgiveness and bear ill-will for the trivial offences we have received. Rightly looked at, who is more contemptible and ridiculous than the little human being who seeks for revenge, buzzing about like a poisonous insect, filled with venom and hatred, watching for a chance to sting his enemy!

How different were the great ones of our race, the noble-hearted, big-souled, magnanimous ones who followed Christ: the martyrs, for example, praying for their torturers and executioners even in the very hour when they were being tortured and put to death: St. Stephen crying out with his dying breath "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!" (ACTS, VII., 59.). How infinitely different is Christ Himself, so meek, so loving, uncomplaining in His passion, and at His death praying "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" (LUKE, XXIII., 34.).

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt., V., 7.). Mercy, and especially forgiveness of offences and injuries, is the great lesson of today's gospel. God grant that we may pay good attention to the lesson and may learn it well!

Otherwise we shall never know how soon or how suddenly we may hear the Voice of an angry God, saying to us: "Thou wicked servant,-----shouldst not thou have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had compassion on thee?" For as the king in today's parable handed over to the torturers the heartless wretch whom he had formerly forgiven, "so also shall My heavenly Father do to you", our Saviour said, "if you forgive not everyone his brother from your hearts."

LVII.—THE ROMAN POLL-TAX.

MATT., XXII., 15-21.

(XXII. SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.)

IN order to explain this gospel I will have to say a few words about the Pharisees, and the reasons which they had for hating our Divine Saviour and seeking His down-fall.

There were certain men in Judaea at our Saviour's time, who pretended to be better than other people, although in reality many of them were much worse. They gave themselves up to study and the reading of the Law, and they taught the people and advised them in matters of every kind. Many of these men were rich and prosperous. They were very proud and had formerly, as a class, been much respected by the people. They were commonly called Pharisees; and when our Divine Saviour began to teach, they did not look upon Him with any great favour or friendship. On the contrary, they hated Him and tried by every means in their power to have Him arrested and put to death.

One reason why the Pharisees hated our Saviour, was that they were jealous of Him. They saw that He was more successful with the people than they were. In fact the people were leaving the Pharisees to follow our Saviour, to behold His miracles, and listen to His teachings; and the Pharisees felt very sore over this, and were filled with jealousy. Then again, although they pretended to be holy, in reality many of them were given to vice and debauchery; and the people knew this; and the pure and spotless life which our adorable Saviour led, His wonderful holiness, His sublime mortification and unselfishness, shamed the Pharisees in the eyes of the people; and this made them hate Him still more. And as if this were not enough, our Divine Lord, having come down from heaven to teach the truth to men, felt bound from the very beginning to condemn the Pharisees publicly, and to denounce them as false teachers of the people and blind leaders of the blind. More than once in His public preaching He had called them hypocrites, and whitened sepulchres, and living lies.

For all these reasons then the Pharisees hated our Saviour bitterly. It would give them the greatest delight if in some way or other they could ruin Him, and thus by removing Him from their path gain back that influence over the people which they had lost through His means. And they were never

tired of making attempts to accomplish this. Wherever our Lord was teaching, there the Pharisees were sure to be around spying upon Him and eavesdropping. They were always watching Him. They were continually putting difficulties to Him, asking questions, and in every way trying to betray Him into some rash action or some treasonable utterance against the laws of the country, for which thy might afterwards have Him arrested and crucified.

Now it is one of these cunning attempts which the Pharisees made upon our Divine Lord, that is described for us in the gospel of today. For we read that going they "consulted among themselves how to insnare Him in His speech."

"And they sent to Him their disciples." They did not go to Him themselves on this occasion, but sent to Him some of the young men whom they had under their instruction. They thought that our Saviour might be less on His guard with these young men than He would be with any of the older Pharisees.

So on that day the disciples of the Pharisees came to our Divine Lord, humbling themselves before Him as hypocrites often do, and praising Him to the skies even while they were plotting His death, "Master," they said, "we know that Thou art a true speaker and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest Thou for any man; for Thou dost and regard the person of men. Tell us therefore what dost thou think, is it lawful to give Tribute to Caesar, or not?"

Now the snare which the wily Pharisees had laid for our Saviour, was hidden in that question: "Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?" To us the question may seem innocent and harmless enough, unless we remember the circumstances, which made it a very dangerous question for our Divine Lord to answer. The tribute which they asked Him about, was a poll-tax that every man in Judaea had to pay; and it was a tax which the Jews detested, because it was the sign of their subjection and slavery to a foreign nation. Judaea, their country and the country of our Divine Lord, had been conquered shortly before by the Roman Empire. Just as Ireland at the present day is subject to England, so Judaea at that time was subject to Rome. It was under the yoke of a foreign power and a foreign emperor or Caesar; and the hated tax or tribute which the disciples of the Pharisees asked our Saviour about, was the sign of their country's slavery.

It is easy to see then what a difficult question our Divine Lord had to answer; and the wily Pharisees knew this well when they put it to Him. No matter how He answered, they thought, He would condemn Himself to death. If He said "Yes, this tax is good and lawful," He would enrage the Jews to such a point that they would probably stone Him. While on the other hand if He said "No, it is not lawful for you to pay this tribute to Caesar," then the Roman soldiers would arrest Him at once for treason against their emperor, and would crucify Him.

But here again our Saviour displays His divine wisdom. For instantly He knows the secrets of those plotting hearts, and understands that the Pharisees are only tempting Him with this simple question, and striving to ensnare Him. As we read in the gospel, "Jesus, knowing their wickedness, said: 'Why do you tempt Me, ye hypocrites! Show Me the coin of the tribute.'" And they handed Him a piece of money such as they used in paying this tax. On one side of the round coin was a picture or image of the Caesar, the foreign emperor to whom the tax was paid; on the other side there was an inscription of certain words.

"And Jesus saith to them: 'Whose image and inscription is this?' They say to Him: 'Caesar's.' Then He sayeth to them: 'Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's.'"

Thus out of their own mouths our Saviour answered their question, with perfect safety and at the same time with perfect justice. He leaned neither towards one side nor towards the other, nor said one word too much; but spoke with such moderation and wisdom that both Jews and Romans saw the justice of His words, namely that what belongs to Caesar must be given to Caesar, and that what belongs to God must be given to God. And the Pharisees, being disappointed again in their attempts to ruin Him, "wondered at His answer and left Him and went their way."

Thus once more our Divine Lord baffled His enemies, because the time for His passion and death had not yet come. And while filling His wily enemies with confusion, He laid down a noble rule, which good Christians have ever followed from the beginning of the Church, and will ever follow to the end of time. That rule is this: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

"Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's," that is, give to your country what belongs to your country. Whether it be the land of your birth or the land of your adoption, does not matter in the least, so long as it is the land where your home is and where the homes of your children are to be. Give to your country what belongs to your country. Bear your share of her burdens in war and peace; vote regularly and honestly; pay the taxes; obey the laws; and in every other way give to your country the love and the loyalty which are her right.

And at the same time render "to God the things that are God's." Adore, love and serve Him; obey His commandments and those of His Church; in one word, be Christian men and women, loyal to your country and above all things loyal to God. Thus you will do your duty during this mortal life in that earthly country in which God has placed you; and when it shall please God to call you away from this earth, you will enter triumphantly into the country of your soul, the kingdom of heaven, where you will be joined with God in unending happiness.

LVIII.—THE DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS.

MATT., IX., 18-26.

(XXIII. SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.)

WE are told in today's gospel about a young girl who died and was raised to life again by our Divine Lord. Her father was Jairus (MARK, V., 22.), a "ruler of the synagogue" and one of the chief men in his native town. Being a pharisee, he was a member of the Jewish government party of that time, and no doubt he had shared in the envy and bitter hatred which the majority of his party felt for our Saviour. But now at last the hand of God had afflicted him with the death of his daughter,—now at last misfortune and sorrow had fallen upon him, softening his heart and turning it back towards God.

Sometimes this is our experience too. While we are prosperous and happy, our eyes are blinded to spiritual things, our hearts are closed against the promptings of God's grace; earth is fair enough for us and we feel no need of heaven. But let misfortune overtake us, let some painful illness lay us low, or some beloved one be torn from us by death,—and then we turn to God feeling that He, after all, is our only true consoler and our only safe reliance.

So it was with this "ruler of the synagogue." He had an only daughter (LUKE, VIII., 42) whom he loved most tenderly, a little girl of twelve years. She had been stricken down by some deadly disease, and notwithstanding everything that wealth and skill could do to save her, she died. It was a bitter affliction to her father's heart. His pride was broken. How poor and small he was, for all his wealth and high position! He was a powerful member of the government party, an influential man in his native city,—but in the presence of death he was weak and helpless. He humbled himself before God and as a reward for his humility faith was given,—faith not only in the God of his fathers Whom all his nation worshipped. but in that same God made man, Jesus Christ, the incarnate Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, Who was teaching and working miracles in Capernaum at that very time. He arose and went to the humble Teacher Whom his proud fellow-pharisees hated and feared. He made his way through the crowds who were listening to our Lord's instructions, threw himself down at our Saviour's feet, and prayed in the fulness of his faith: "Lord, my daughter is even now dead; but come, lay Thy hand upon her, and she shall live."

"And Jesus, rising up, followed him, with His disciples." So quickly did our Divine Lord respond to the prayer of Jairus. That prayer was overflowing with faith and humility; and Jesus arose at once to answer it.

That would be our experience too, if our prayers were offered with like dispositions. If we send up our prayers to God in the same spirit of deep humility and lively faith, they will be answered no less graciously. If we call upon our Saviour humbly and trustfully to come and cure us when our souls need cure, to support our souls through the violent fevers of sore temptation, to raise them up from the death of mortal sin,—He will be no less kind and merciful to us than he was to that afflicted father.

He arose at once when He heard his request, and followed him. His disciples went with Him, the multitudes whom He had been teaching, crowding and thronging about Him and pressing upon His very footsteps in their desire to be near their Master.

Now there was a certain woman among them who had been troubled for twelve years with an issue of blood. She had spent all that she had upon physicians, St. Mark tells us, and was nothing the better for it, but rather worse. This poor woman had been listening to our Saviour's discourses, drinking in every word which fell from His sacred lips, and during all the time that she had been listening her faith in Christ was growing stronger and stronger, until now finally she said to herself: "If I shall touch only His garment, I shall be healed." So she made her way through the crowds and creeping up behind our Divine Lord, laid her hand reverently on just the hem of His garment. From that very moment she was healed of her disease.

It was her great faith in Christ which wrought this wonderful cure. The Sacred Scriptures assure us that by faith we could remove mountains; but it must be remembered that there are different kinds and degrees of faith. There is the dull, torpid, almost indifferent faith with which we are only too likely to content ourselves; and there is the active, living faith of the early Christians and of so many saints in later times, which could perform any miracle and obtain any favour within the Will of God.

The sick woman evidently had such faith as this, and therefore she was cured of her disease. For although she barely touched the hem of our Saviour's garment, He knew that "virtue had gone out of Him," as He knew all things, and turning and looking at her, He said: "Be of good heart, daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole."

And so they passed on to the home of Jairus. Within the house the dead body of the young girl was lying, surrounded by weeping friends and relatives. According to the custom of that country the musicians were there too, to play sad music and sing requiems and lamentations for the departed one. The

Lord of Life entered that home of death and made His way through its crowded inmates. "Weep not," He said to them, "she is not dead, but sleepeth." If they had known that He was God, their behaviour would have been entirely different. But to many of them at that time He was certainly unknown; and neither understanding the meaning of His words nor being aware of His almighty power Who spoke them, they "laughed Him to scorn." Jesus left them there, taking with Him only Peter and James and John besides the young girl's father and mother. With these five He went into the room where she was lying dead. He took her by the hand and said: "Arise!" And He is God, the Master of life and death, and she could not but obey Him. The spirit came back to the pale form from which death had so lately torn it. The young girl arose and walked about.

And "they were astonished with a great astonishment," the gospel tells us; for this was surely one of the grandest miracles which our Divine Saviour ever performed. His life on earth was full of miracles. The three years of His public ministry were an almost continuous series of marvellous events. Over and over again He gave sight to the blind and health to the sick; He changed water into wine; He walked upon the sea of Galilee, He calmed the winds and the waves by a single word in the midst of the storm; but if we except His Own glorious Resurrection, He never performed a grander marvel nor by any single action gave clearer proof that He was all He claimed to be, true God of Heaven and Earth, than when He raised the dead to life.

"If I had not come and spoken to them.," He said on one occasion to His apostles, "they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin.-----If I had not done among them the works that no other man hath done, they would not have sin" (JOHN, XV., 22.). Truly we will have "no excuse for our sin," if after hearing so often His loving and convincing words, and knowing, as we do know well, His wonderful works, we fail to believe and obey Him. Truly we will be without excuse if we fail to learn even from today's gospel, for example, a lesson of trust in our Divine Lord and firm reliance upon Him.

So surely as you place your trust in Him, you will never be forsaken. For He healed the woman with the issue of blood, and He will cure your weakened souls. He brought back to life the dead daughter of Jairus, and He will raise your souls to new life if they are dead through mortal sin. It is only necessary that you pray to Him regularly, that you make use of His sacraments, that you help Him to help you by doing your share.

Therefore do not despair of improving yourself because you have tried two or three times and failed, or because you have tried scores of times and failed. No matter what your sins may be, you are still a man, or a woman, with free-

will and an immortal soul. No matter how shamefully you may be enslaved by evil habits, yours is still the power to break them with God's almighty assistance. To every sinner, great and small,—to every slave of sinful habits,—whether those habits be only venially sinful but nevertheless dangerous, or mortally sinful and ruinous,—I may say from this pulpit today: Your soul is not dead, but sleepeth. The free-will which God gave you to choose between good and evil, the manhood or the womanhood which is in you, are not dead; they are only sleeping. You may be a drunkard, a thief, an adulterer, a careless or rebellious Catholic; but do not imagine that you are already lost, do not imagine that you have gone too far towards hell to turn back and flee from its eternal fires. Be done with dreaming; arouse yourself from stupid sleep; rise up, while there is time, with the manhood which is still in you however stained and degraded, with the free-will that makes you a man. Break the bad habits, cast off the foul and filthy chains. Reject Satan, choose Christ. And He Who brought back the daughter of Jairus, will raise up your soul, from the illness of its imperfections, or from the death of its mortal sins, to a firm and lasting place in eternal life.

LIX.—“THE CONSUMMATION.”

MATT., XXIV., 15-35.

(XXIV. (LAST) SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.)

THE year of the Church or the ecclesiastical year, which begins with the first Sunday of Advent, closes with the week following today the twenty-fourth and last Sunday after Pentecost. And even as today with its following week-days is the end of the ecclesiastical year, so in the gospel which is read today our Saviour foretold, first, the end of the Jewish nation as a nation, and secondly, the end of the world. Some parts of this gospel then relate to the end of the world, while other parts of it refer to the end and destruction of the Jewish nation.

When the end of the world will be, it is only God Who knows. “Of that day and hour no one knoweth,” our Saviour said, “no, not the angels of heaven, but the Father alone” (MATT., XXIV., 36.).

But the end of the Jewish nation as a nation and as God’s Chosen People, the destruction of Jerusalem, their capital city, by a Roman army, and their own dispersion and flight as exiles and wanderers into every region of the earth,—that all came to pass less than forty years after our Saviour prophesied it.

“The abomination of desolation which was spoken of by Daniel the Prophet” fell upon Jerusalem and its temple eighteen-hundred-and-forty-three years ago, in the year of our Lord 70. For many hundreds of years before that date there had been regular daily sacrifices in the Jerusalem temple, a lamb each morning and evening besides other oblations; but never since that time has victim been solemnly slain or sacrifice offered by the Jews. The desolation which shall continue to the end of the world, is ever in the holy place where their temple formerly stood, even as Daniel predicted that it would be.

Nearly six-hundred years before the birth of Christ this great prophet foretold the very year when Christ would be baptized and the very year when Christ would be slain. He foretold the precise time when “everlasting justice would be brought, and vision and prophecy would be fulfilled, and the Saint of saints would be anointed” (Dan., IX., 24.). “Christ shall be slain,” he wrote, “and the people that shall deny Him, shall not be His. And a people with their leader that shall come, shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be waste; and after the end of the war the appointed desolation.-----The victim and the sacrifice shall fail: and there shall be in

the temple the abomination of desolation: and the desolation shall continue even to the consummation and to the end" (DAN., IX., 26-27).

These are the very words of Daniel the Prophet, as we may read them for ourselves in the Old Testament in the famous ninth chapter of his prophecy. It was from this prophecy that our Saviour in today's gospel quoted about the fall of Jerusalem and about the flight of the Jews, adding to it and confirming it by His Own divine authority. He knew, as He knows all things, that the war and the desolation, of which Daniel had written six centuries before, were now less than forty years distant. He knew that many of those who were listening to Him that day, would still be alive when Titus with his Roman soldiers should destroy their temple and their city. And He warned them of those awful times which they would pass through and those awful scenes of pillage and massacre which they would live to see.

"Then they that are in Judaea," He said, "let them flee to the mountains: and he that is on the house-top"—for the house-top was like a favorite sitting-room to them, and the Jews of that day spent much of their time when at home sitting or reclining on the flat roofs of their low houses—"he that is on the house-top," our Saviour said, "let him not come down to take anything out of his house: and he that is in the field, let him not go back to take his coat. -----For there shall be then great tribulation."

So tremendous would be the horrors of that siege and surrender of Jerusalem, that many would think that the end of the world was close upon them. And they would look for Christ to come again, as they knew from their prophecies that He would come in judgment at the end of the world; and some would say that He had already returned, and some would be even wicked enough to impersonate Him. Therefore our Saviour warned them: "Then if any man shall say to you: 'Lo, here is Christ, or there,' do not believe him. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch as to deceive (if possible) even the elect.-----If there fore they shall say to you 'Behold He is in the desert,' go ye not out; 'Behold He is in the closets,' believe it not."

When Christ does return from heaven to judge this world, there will be no need of anyone telling his neighbor that He is here, or there. For He will come "in the clouds of heaven with much power and majesty;" and His coming will be as plain to all as the lightning which flashes from east to west. "As lightning cometh out of the east, and appeareth even unto the west," our Saviour said, "so also shall the coming of the Son of Man be."—"Wheresoever the body shall be, there shall the eagles also be gathered together;" and wheresoever Christ shall sit on that day of judgment, there shall all mankind be gathered together at the foot of His throne.

"I saw a great white throne," St. John the Evangelist wrote years afterwards in the Apocalypse; "I saw a great white throne, and One sitting upon it from Whose face the earth and heaven fled away and there was no place found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing in the presence of the throne; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and hell gave up their dead that were in them; and they were judged everyone, according to their works" (APOC., XX., 11-13.).

Only after the Gospel shall have been preached in the whole world, will this general judgment take place. "This Gospel of the kingdom," said our Divine Lord, "shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then shall the consummation come" (MATT., XXIV., 14.). Eclipses, or more fearful darkenings, of the sun and moon; comets and falling stars; disarrangement of the universe, or at least of that portion of it nearest to our earth;—will precede that coming of the Son of Man. His sign, the holy cross, shall appear in the skies. His angels shall summon the dead from their graves.

"The sun shall be darkened," He said, "and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be moved: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven: and then shall all tribes of the earth mourn: and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with much power and majesty. And He shall send His angels with a trumpet and a great voice: and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest parts of the heavens to the utmost bounds of them."

Even as His blessed Mother and His apostles on Ascension Thursday saw Him rise upwards into the clouds while He was blessing them with lifted hands, so shall we behold Him on the judgment-day descending down again. On that great Ascension Thursday of long ago, "a cloud received Him out of their sight" (ACTS, I., 9.); and while they stood gazing sadly up into the sky where He was no longer visible, suddenly two angels were beside them, who said: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to heaven? This Jesus Who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come as you have seen Him going" (ACTS, I., 11.). All mankind shall see Him coming in the clouds on the judgment-day, even as He disappeared in the clouds at His ascension. All mankind shall behold Him returning "in the clouds of heaven with much power and majesty" to judge the world.

And when angels and demons and men have all alike been publicly and solemnly judged and sentenced, then "the heavens and the earth which are now" (II. PET., III., 7.) shall be destroyed by fire,—not annihilated, not thrown

back into the nothingness from which God created them,—but changed into “new heavens and a new earth” (II. PET., III., 13.) that will continue forever.

As surely as the ecclesiastical year ends with this coming week, so surely will that day arrive when time itself shall end, and shall merge into eternity. This human generation, this human race, “shall not pass, till all these things be done. Heaven and earth shall pass,” our Saviour said, “but My words shall not pass.”

Men and women may wonder why that day is so long deferred. Men and women who do not use their intelligence, may scoff and sneer. “There shall come deceitful scoffers,” St. Peter wrote in his second epistle, “walking after their own lusts, saying: ‘Where is His promise or His coming? For since the time that the fathers slept, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.’-----But of this one thing be not ignorant, my beloved,” he adds, “that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord delayeth not His promise, as some imagine, but dealeth patiently for your sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance. But the day of the Lord shall come, as a thief,” St. Peter continues, “in which the heavens shall pass away with great violence, and the elements shall be melted with heat, and the earth and the works which are in it shall be consumed by fire.” Nevertheless he says: “We look for new heavens and a new earth according to His promises, in which justice dwelleth. Wherefore, dearly beloved, waiting for these things, be diligent that you may be found before Him unspotted and blameless, in peace” (II. PET., III., 3-14.).

We must appear “before Him” for our particular judgment even at the moment of our death; and from that decisive moment on through all the ages yet to be, our soul will be in heaven or hell or purgatory, while our body is mouldering in the grave. At last, when time has reached its consummation, soul and arisen body shall be re-united to stand with the rest of mankind at the foot of the “great white throne” and to share in that general judgment of angels and men, which shall make known to all the sins and the merits of all, and shall vindicate the ways which God has used towards His creatures through all the history of this created world, and shall prove and make manifest, to devils and lost souls as well as to angels and saints, the Wisdom and the Justice and the Mercy of God.

May He grant us that on that day of wrath, we may not stand trembling among the cursed ones, whom His withering sentence shall hurl back into the everlasting fire; but may rather rejoice among the blessed of His Father, whom He will invite to possess forevermore the Kingdom, prepared for them from the foundation of the world.

LX.—ALL-SAINTS' DAY.

MATT., V., 1-12.

ALL-Hallows or All-Saints' Day is the feast of all the saints in heaven. In the old English language of some centuries ago hallows and saints meant the same thing; and even to this day the eve or vigil of All-Saints' is often called All-Hallows Eve.

On this feast of All-Saints' we celebrate a great triumph and victory; not our own triumph and victory though, because we are still fighting the battle, and we can never be sure that we have won that battle until our earth-life is over. But we celebrate the triumph and victory of those that have gone before us, of the blessed and happy multitudes who formerly lived the life which we are now living; who were tempted and tried as we are, and fought the fight which we are now fighting; our fellow-Christians, our fellow-soldiers, who bravely conquered their temptations, and overcame their enemy Satan with all his works and pomps, and who are now enjoying in heaven their everlasting reward.

On this feast of All-Saints' we commemorate every citizen of heaven, from the great Queen of Saints, the Blessed Virgin herself, down to the last human soul which was released from purgatory perhaps only a moment ago. It may be that some of our own dear departed ones are already there in the eternal glory; if so, they share with even those heroes of virtue, the canonized saints, in the celebration of today. For although the blessed ones in heaven differ from one another in glory, as star differs from star in brightness, yet the least of those holy ones is as truly perfectly happy forever and ever as the greatest. Even as cups of different sizes will contain different quantities of water, so may various souls receive various degrees of happiness and glory. But every soul in heaven is replete to overflowing, everyone is filled to its full capacity with the light and the love of the infinite, all-beautiful God.

And *they* are beautiful, far beyond the beauty of this earth, they shine with the eternal splendor of "the light that never was on sea or land," they are radiant above the fairest dream of painter or poet. They dwell in that everlasting city which "hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of God hath enlightened it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof" (Apoc., XXI., 23.),—the Lamb of the great sacrifice, immolated on the cross Good Friday afternoon even as lambs had been sacrificed in the Jewish temple each morning and evening for so many centuries before that Good Friday,—

the "Lamb of God," our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is always present in our tabernacles, often pictured as a Lamb on the front of our altars. He Himself, the King of kings and Lord of lords and Saint of saints, is ever among them.

It was thus that St. John the Evangelist saw them, gathered around the Lamb, in his wonderful vision. "I saw a great multitude which no man could number," he wrote, "of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne, and in the sight of the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands: and they cried with a loud voice, saying: 'Salvation to our God, Who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb.' And all the angels stood round about the throne, and the ancients, and the four living creatures; and they fell down before the throne upon their faces, and adored God, saying: 'Amen. Benediction, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, honour, and power, and strength to our God forever and ever. Amen.' And one of the ancients answered and said to me: 'These that are clothed in white robes, who are they? and whence come they?' And I said to him: 'My Lord, thou knowest.' And he said to me: 'These are they who are come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and they serve Him day and night in His temple: and He That sitteth on the throne, shall dwell over them. They shall no more hunger nor thirst, neither shall the sun fall on them nor any heat. For the Lamb, Which is in the midst of the throne, shall rule them, and shall lead them to the fountains of the waters of life, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes'" (APOC., VII., 9-17.).

So on this great feast we dimly see them around the great white throne: far higher than all the others their ever-blessed Queen, Mary, the Mother of God: and down beneath her the patriarchs and prophets who foretold the birth of her Divine Son: the apostles who lived and laboured with Him: the martyrs who shed their life-blood for Him: the virgins who consecrated their lives and all they had to His blessed service: the confessors who suffered in His cause: the popes and bishops, priests and people.

They all once lived this earthly life which we are living now. They had temptations and trials much greater than ours. They fought a glorious fight, and they are enjoying now an everlasting victory.

So in the spirit of the Church today we celebrate their triumph. For they are the Church's brightest ornaments. "O truly blessed Mother Church," St. Bede said twelve-hundred years ago, "who art so richly and fragrantly adorned with the roses of the martyrs and the lilies of the virgins!" Even yet they belong to the Church as truly as we belong to it. They in heaven, we on earth, and the suffering ones in purgatory, make up the three great branches

of the Catholic Church, and form that Communion of Saints which we mention so often in the Creed. Each of us has one or more of them for his especial patrons and protectors. We bear their very names, given to us at baptism and in confirmation. Hence they are no strangers to us, but are ever mindful of us and interested in us, ever watching us and praying for us. Separated from us for a time, they long to be united with us for eternity.

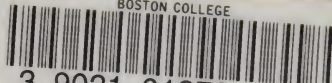
God grant that their desire may be fulfilled, and that after finally winning our fight against temptation and evil, we may be united with them in everlasting triumph. And on the morning of this great feast, while we rejoice in their happiness, let us resolve daily to pray for their assistance and daily to imitate their virtues, remembering, for our consolation and encouragement in life's battle, the sweet words of our adorable Redeemer, the Lamb, recorded in the gospel of today: "Blessed are the poor in spirit (the humble and lowly-minded): for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek (the gentle ones, who yield not overmuch to angry passion): for they shall possess the Land. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for My Sake: be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in, heaven."

OMNI DIE

LAUS MARIAE!

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